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**THE COMMERCIAL SIDE OF
LITERATURE**

The
COMMERCIAL
SIDE
of
LITERATURE
by
MICHAEL JOSEPH



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The Commercial Side of Literature

CHAPTER I

THE MODERN NOVEL

“OF the making of books there is no end.” The spread of popular education, the commercialisation of printing on a large scale, and the ever-growing demand for books of all kinds, especially fiction, are factors responsible for the vast increase in the number published yearly in this country. Statistics, it is said, can be made to prove anything. Certainly the increasing crop of books is evident enough without the aid of quoted figures. Reviewers are aware of it, sometimes to their sorrow. The number of new publishing firms which have come into existence in the last few years testifies to the activity if not the prosperity of the industry. The vast output of new novels is particularly significant. “The reading public has increased enormously. Every town and half the villages in England have their own library circle, where books may be read and borrowed and discussed. Every year the commercial potentialities of the successful novelist are increased.” I quote the words of a well-known publisher.

Authors have sprung into being in surprisingly large

numbers, and often from equally surprising sources. It is a commonplace to say that nowadays every one thinks he can write a book. It is a book-writing age. Practically every one of importance has been prevailed upon (one suspects that many of them did not require much persuasion) to write his or her reminiscences. Even people of no conceivable importance have inflicted their reminiscences on the public. Presently we shall have sixth-form schoolboys unburdening their memoirs, for the craze continues.

In the field of fiction the increase in the number of novels published is even more remarkable. One artificial factor which is largely responsible for the present state of affairs—the lending libraries—we can examine later. Present-day novelists are recruited—it would be nearer the mark to say that they enlist voluntarily—from all classes of society, irrespective of education, experience, or even ability. The author of “Pamela,” so often described as the Father of the English Novel, must surely turn in his grave unless he is mercifully unaware of the swelling heterogeneous ranks of the modern novelist.

This state of affairs is vastly encouraging to anybody with literary ambitions. The lowering of the standard of published work inevitably encourages more and more people to try their hands at getting into print. The rapid growth of journalism tempts its numerous practitioners, successful or otherwise, to turn their attention to the book world—successful journalists, often out of a sense of *noblesse oblige*; and the unsuccessful, probably because they think they may have better luck with a novel. And they very often do. From spasmodic articles the victim of *cacoethes scribendi* drifts, probably unsuccessfully, to the short story, the most

difficult literary form, then turns hopefully to the more catholic and certainly easier prospect of a novel.

Last year (1924) over 12,000 new books were published. To quote the *Publishers' Circular*: "The year 1924 takes rank as the record year in the history of British book production." Twenty years ago the figure was less than 7,000. But it is not as a result of the increase in output that conditions in the publishing world have undergone such considerable change. The whole business of book publishing has become much more complicated because of developments in the value of literary property.

The cry of "too many books" is frequently raised nowadays. But in 1913 there were actually as many books issued as in 1923. And there are more bookshops to-day than ten years ago. As against this, the big increase in the cost of producing books has undoubtedly tended to limit the output of publishers.

It is a curious fact that when people talk disparagingly of too many books, they really mean too many novels. Every year sees an increase in the number of novels published. It is undoubtedly the field which attracts the largest number of new writers.

From remote and stray beginnings the novel has in recent years suddenly assumed the proportions of a literary giant. Its rapid growth and development are amazing. Of the 20,000 odd books published since the beginning of this century, by far the largest proportion consists of works of fiction. Presumably the laws of supply and demand regulates the production of published fiction. The demand for fiction on such a wholesale scale must be due to the artificial complexities of a civilised state. Men and women, especially women, seek in the vicarious realm of fiction the wider range of human

experiences which a complex and narrowed life denies them. Having neither time nor opportunity in this crowded, hustled existence to taste the joys and sorrows, the vicissitudes and triumphs of a more elemental experience, they turn to fiction to satisfy their natural craving. Perhaps it would be truer to say that the flavour of their own experiences is lost in the monotony and proximity of ordinary everyday life. The drama of one's own personal problems and experiences is seldom realised. There is not time to relish contact with the sharper edges of life. For emotional satisfaction, civilisation-hampered people turn to fiction.

From the author's point of view this preamble may seem not altogether to the point. But so many modern novels fail through an imperfect understanding or complete ignorance of the nature and functions of the novel that the point is well worth examination. Every author who contemplates writing a novel should make sure that he or she can satisfactorily answer the question "Why do people read novels?"

A complete answer to the query would necessarily cover many varying reasons. If one could take a census of readers a surprising variety of motive would doubtless be revealed. Some readers would vaguely reply, "I want to be entertained." Others, more intelligently candid, would reply that to them fiction represented variously a temporary escape from the harsh realities and dreary monotony of their lives; an opiate, a narcotic, an intellectual stimulant. A few, perhaps unconsciously, seek the benefit of the instructional pill in the generous jam of fiction. Some read to enlarge their mental horizons, to add to their range of experience. Others derive from novels the pleasures of observation and criticism. A not inconsiderable number of people

read at any rate the works of our most fashionable novelists in order to guard against potential chinks in their conversational armour. But, fundamentally, the demand for fiction is inspired by the desire, generally subconscious, to enjoy the illusions which real life, with its disappointments and hardships, fails to give the reader. This explains the popular preference for stories with happy endings. Deprived of the satisfaction of a triumphant climax to their own efforts in life, disillusioned people turn to fiction for consolation and, by subconsciously identifying themselves with the heroes and heroines of the novel, achieve a temporary and illusory satisfaction. The majority of plays produced on the modern stage, with their artificial happy endings, fulfil the same purpose.

Not every novelist will subscribe to this theory. The realists aim at a truthful presentation of life, or of a fragment of life. They refuse to hand the reader a pair of rose-coloured spectacles. They contend that it is artistically wrong to present a falsely coloured picture of life. The novel, they submit, should truly represent life. Not for them the artificial happy ending, the conventional triumph of virtue over villainy, the careful omission of the dull or unpleasant phases of life. They prefer the science of photography to the art of crude imagery. They, in their turn, are catering for a section of the reading public which, if numerically inferior to the more popular element, is certainly entitled to be regarded as discriminating.

Commercially, of course, the comparison is significant. For every reader of Henry James and D. H. Lawrence there are a hundred readers of Nat Gould and Ethel M. Dell. The contempt of some authors, whose success is artistic rather than commercial, for their more popular contemporaries is a familiar symptom. It is very stupid.

They speak disparagingly of "tripe" and "philistines" and their own inability to "write down to the public," because they fail to recognise that there is as wide a gulf between certain popular and certain artistic authors as there is between the *News of the World* and the *Nation and Athenæum*. They both appear in print, but there the resemblance ends. It is also a publishing anomaly that novels should be issued at a uniform price and in more or less uniform format.

It is, however, difficult to sympathise with the author of high artistic reputation and correspondingly small sales who tearfully laments his inability to exceed the sales of —. (Here he names bitterly one of the artistically despised but commercially flourishing "best-sellers.")

A few authors, it is quite true, have achieved both reputation and profit, but the gulf between the highbrow and the "best seller" is so wide that very, very few can hope to bridge it. Sometimes the young novelist finds it hard to believe that certain novelists' books don't sell, in spite of eulogistic reviews in eminent journals. But good reviews don't necessarily sell books. This question of press reviews is dealt with in Chapter XI. For the present, the budding novelist must take the statement on trust. I could reveal figures which would convince the most obstinate sceptic.

It amounts to this. To sell his novel, the author must satisfy the requirements of the public. Public taste is a very difficult thing to gauge, but certain fundamental principles are plain. I don't mean that it's only a question of assembling and mixing the necessary ingredients to produce a "best-seller." There is a good deal more in the making of saleable literature than that.

I always remember a cartoon published a few years ago by an American paper. It showed a kitchen in a

chaotic state, a table stacked with dirty dishes, the floor an untidy mess of brooms, pails and other household utensils—a kitchen as dreary and dirty as could be found anywhere. In the midst of this a young domestic servant is sitting, untidy and bedraggled as the kitchen itself. Her feet are on the table, and a novel lies open on her lap. There is an ecstatic smile on her face—in striking contrast to her drab surroundings—and she is looking in imagination, depicted in the cartoon by the head of an Adonis in a cloud, at the hero of the novel she is reading. The title of the cartoon is "The Best Seller."

That cartoon was based on an understanding of human nature. Authors who can produce the type of novel that takes the spice of dashing adventure and breathless romance into the drab alleyways of grey lives will worry more about paying their income tax than paying their rent.

At this point it may be illuminating to go more thoroughly into this question of the "best-seller." At the outset let me disclaim any intention of trying to provide an infallible recipe for the manufacture of this coveted product. So many different and elusive factors contribute to the success of a published novel that a satisfactory analysis is impossible.

There are, however, certain readily identifiable qualities which are revealed by an examination of the finished article. First, there is sincerity. Whatever foolish (and envious) sneers are levelled at the "best-seller," there was never a "best-seller" yet that was written with the author's tongue in his cheek. The big battalions of the reading public may not be intellectually distinguished, but they are quick to detect insincerity. Besides, to write convincingly—and here we are on the very foundations of successful fiction writing—it is surely

essential to be sincere. If the writer can't sincerely write about the tribulations of a young girl's romance or take a deep, personal interest in the progress of his characters to a happy, satisfying conclusion, he might just as well put down his pen, and turn to more congenial, if less profitable subjects. Of all the qualities of the "best-seller" I am inclined to rate sincerity the highest. It is also the most searching test of the author's ability to produce a "best-seller."

Next, it must contain, or rather *be* a good story. This is the backbone of the "best-seller." No novel ever sold over twenty thousand copies that was not a good story. That is to say, it must have a good plot—by no means a feature of every novel, but undoubtedly an essential one in the case of the "best-seller."—plenty of action, and a strong, sustained human interest. Now "human interest" is one of the things that novelists and critics talk glibly about, but what is it?

Its meaning, as applied to a novel, is that the reader should be enabled, by the setting and circumstances of the story, to identify himself with the central figure or figures, to find himself confronted at each stage of the story with the problems and situations which confront the protagonists. In other words, the hero's problems should become a personal equation; the reader should be saying to himself, "Now what am I going to do?" In order to obtain this effect, the story must obviously be striking enough to arouse and sustain the reader's interest, while at the same time it must not impose too much of a strain on his credulity. If at any stage in the story the reader puts the book down in surprise or disgust, because he is asked to swallow something too wildly improbable, the illusion which is the whole fabric of fiction is immediately shattered. The success of "If

"Winter Comes" was largely due to the fact that the average reader recognised himself in Mark Sabre, and, as he read the story, imagined himself up against it just as poor Mark was. It is also an illuminating point that those readers who didn't like "If Winter Comes," or who couldn't understand its wide popularity, fastened on the improbability of the Effie episode as the weak point of the book. For them, it was asking a little too much to believe that any man would have behaved with Mark's quixotic foolishness.

The author of a "best-seller" is thus at all times between the Scylla of exasperating the reader by over-straining his credulity and the Charybdis of losing his interest by an unexciting passage in the story.

But to return to the ingredients of the "best-seller." The importance of the happy, satisfying ending has already been emphasised. This does not, however, mean that there should be no element of sadness or grief in the story. On the contrary. The greater the troubles and tribulations of the hero or heroine, the more effective the happy ending when it does come. In fact, the hero or heroine will usually be found, on examination of the "best-seller," to have plumbed the very lowest depths of misery, to have fought against almost overwhelming odds, to have endured almost incredible misfortune, before finally arriving (in the last chapter) in the haven of permanent happiness and prosperity.

It is all very simple. The novel that sells on the scale of Ethel M. Dell just represents the ordinary human being's idea of a happy dream duly realised. It never does happen in real life; that's why the largest numbers of readers turn to the story which supplies their need.

Less discernible, but as notable a feature of the best-seller, is the outstanding theme, or message, or moral,

call it what you will, which pervades the whole story. There is always something which lifts the story a little above the level of the ordinary tale, and which strikes a responsive note in the heart of the average reader. Often this *motif* is religious in character ; but whatever form it may take, it invariably appeals to a deep-rooted human instinct. There is, curiously enough, inevitably something primitive in anything that appeals to people in the mass.

Finally, there is another, and a much more practical aspect of the "best-seller." I refer to its length. The average novel is about 80,000 words long. Most "best-sellers" will be found to be considerably longer. I choose a few titles at random : "If Winter Comes," "Peter Jackson," "Sonia," "Sinister Street," "The Woman Thou Gavest Me," "The Green Hat," "Way of Revelation," "The Rosary," "The Middle of the Road"—all books considerably longer than the ordinary novel. The significance of this point is doubtful. Possibly it reflects the public desire for value for money ; or it may be an indication that a story which is destined to appeal to an abnormally wide circle of readers must be constructed on a scale sufficiently vast to require a larger number of printed pages in its ultimate form.

The secret of the "best-seller," however, is not to be discovered by any analysis of existing specimens. Most "best-sellers" have surprised their own authors. It is certainly true that authors who have produced a "best-seller" usually regard other of their books as more deserving of popular favour. Of one thing I am convinced ; the success of any novel largely depends on the time at which it is published. "If Winter Comes" appeared at the psychological moment. So did "The Middle of the Road." If Sir Philip Gibbs's novel had been published

a year earlier, or a year later, I am sure I am right in believing that it would never have enjoyed the wide popularity it at once attained in 1923.

For the purpose of the foregoing attempt at analysis I have dealt only with modern "best-sellers," but it must be remembered that many of the books which delighted previous generations still sell many thousands of copies a year. In such ever popular stories as the novels of Dickens, "Tom Brown's School-days," "Don Quixote," "Pilgrim's Progress," "The Rosary," "Black Beauty," "Little Lord Fauntleroy" and many others, will be found the same fundamental appeal, transcending all merits or faults of style, narrative or theme.

Then there are many authors whose popularity is not quite so evident, but whose books are regularly sold and reprinted by the ten thousand and twenty thousand. Such authors are not generally considered to rank among the "best-sellers," but their large sales may be accounted for by the presence of best-selling qualities in their work.

One factor which undoubtedly contributes to the success or failure of a novel is its title. A happy title is a tremendous asset. Although it may be going too far to suggest that a good title will make all the difference between success and failure, the theory was tested in an interesting fashion quite recently. A book of short stories was published simultaneously in England and America, the English publisher choosing one title, the American publisher another. For a volume of stories it met with immediate success in this country, but in America proved an almost complete failure. With most of his edition on his hands, the American publisher took the unusual step of reissuing the book under the title chosen by the English publisher, with the interesting result that its sales began to increase immediately, and

the book eventually proved as successful in America as in England.

The wrapper, or "jacket" as it is technically called, is also a potent selling factor. Originally devised to protect the book from becoming worn and dirty (it is still sometimes referred to as the "dust cover"), its development has been mainly pictorial, and many of the coloured designs and illustrations which adorn the paper wrapper of the modern novel are so attractive that they cannot fail to have a favourable influence on the book's sale.

Ask any publisher's traveller what a difference a good "jacket" makes. For some novels a plain, dignified wrapper is most appropriate, but for the majority a striking picture in colours which illustrates an exciting incident in the story is more likely to attract the attention of potential readers.

It is questionable whether "readableness" has much to do with the success of a novel. Although a vigorous narrative style often contributes to a book's popularity (as, for instance, it undoubtedly did in the case of "Peter Jackson") I doubt whether it is an essential factor. One or two recent "best-sellers" have been very poorly written. And an author like Leonard Merrick, one of the most "readable" of modern novelists, has never enjoyed the wide success he has deserved. E. M. Forster, author of that fine novel "A Passage to India," is another eminently "readable" novelist whose reputation is on a much bigger scale than his sales.

In dealing first with the type of novel which sells on a large scale I may be neglecting the ambitions of the beginner who wants reasonably enough to learn to walk before he tries to run; in other words, to be published at all. With a clear conscience I can gladden his heart.

Under present conditions it is ridiculously easy to get a novel of any merit accepted and published. I am sure that the majority of reviewers will agree with me that it is hardly necessary to qualify that statement. So much that is trivial, fatuous, uninteresting, and appallingly dull is published every year that there is hope for everybody who can wield a pen or a typewriter with mediocre efficiency to join the heterogeneous ranks of our "novelists." Callow youths, fresh from the universities; women, young and old, with more spare time than conscience; journalists, film actors, parsons, clerks, all turn their hand to novel writing. The amazing part of it all is that publishers should be ready to risk their money in producing these futilities.

All of which will doubtless make encouraging reading for the embryo novelist. At the same time the young author may reasonably be anxious to frame his work on such lines that it will appeal to as wide a public as possible. If only it were possible to supply an infallible recipe for the production of popular fiction! Unfortunately—or fortunately—there is no royal road to success. It often happens that an author, sometimes a very well known author, deliberately sets out to manufacture a "best-seller." He writes a story full of action, of human interest and emotional appeal, sends it off to his publisher, who reads it, and is highly enthusiastic—and what happens? The novel is published, generously advertised, probably well reviewed and—somehow or other—doesn't "come off." Occasionally, it is true, the attempt does succeed. I cannot help feeling that John Masefield deliberately set out to write a "selling" story in "Sard Harker." (I may be doing Mr. Masefield an injustice, in which case I apologise). In this instance he has undoubtedly succeeded; but "Sard Harker" is, I venture to say, a *tour de*

force—and an exception. The most notable instance in recent years was the success of “The Green Goddess,” a play written—extraordinarily enough—by the late Mr. William Archer. It is by no means out of place to quote the success of a play, since the qualities which go to the making of a successful play are fundamentally the same as those which cause a book to sell. The trouble is that, with a few lucky exceptions, no one can deliberately turn out a “best-seller.”

No one can tell beforehand which way the wind of popularity is going to blow.

It is equally true, and perhaps even more surprising, that a novel in which neither author nor publisher has any great confidence, and which is launched into the world in a spirit of hope rather than confidence, confounds all the sceptics with unaccountably large sales. It is becoming increasingly difficult in these mass production days for any novel to attain big sales without the energetic efforts of the publisher behind it. Novels that are simply published soon languish and die. But it does sometimes happen that a novel “arrives” of its own accord. Public taste is a mystery and always will be.

This aspect of the commercial side of literature will probably surprise the new author—if it is not actually bewildering—but it can have no practical interest for him. It will not teach how to write saleable work. If only as a warning, however, it is worth consideration. But, allowing for the uncertainty of publishing, it is, I think, possible to differentiate roughly between the types of novel which have (at any rate at the present time) a popular appeal and those which have not.

It is much easier to approach the question negatively. Fashions in fiction come and go. The pendulum of favour is always more or less slowly swinging, although

its movement may not be clearly discernible. Certain types of novel will—one is safe in asserting—never fail to find a market. The romantic novel, the adventure story, the mystery or detective story, the humorous novel—these are assured of a consistent measure of popularity. The psychological novel on the other hand, like the “problem” play, seems destined to have a limited vogue.

At the present time I should say that the straightforward “good story” is most in favour, with a corresponding prejudice against the psychological and often rather morbid novel. Certain types of story are difficult to place nowadays: these include historical romances, stories with a religious or spiritual bias, stories with a strong moral flavour and “pre-war” stories of any kind (i.e., stories in which the action takes place prior to 1914). There are, of course, brilliant exceptions. Rafael Sabatini’s historical novels sell in their many thousands, for instance.

For several years there has been a strong prejudice against volumes of short stories. Signs are not wanting that this prejudice is fast disappearing, but to-day there are very few publishers who will take the risk of publishing short stories in book form unless the author is already a novelist of some reputation. This prejudice on the part of publishers is easy to understand, for they know from experience that, generally speaking, the public will not buy volumes of short stories. A very well-known novelist of my acquaintance, whose novels touch the thirty to forty thousand mark in sales, also excels in the more difficult art of the short story. Yet neither of the two collections of short stories he has published has reached a sale of 5,000 copies. The fault lies with the public, not the publishers.

The public’s dislike for short stories in book form is

not difficult to explain. It is partly traditional (and tradition proverbially dies hard) and is the result of a natural reaction from the surfeit of short stories which the 'nineties produced. "Scarcely an author of any repute or no repute," says Rebecca West, "but wrote and published short stories. The better periodicals of the period, such as 'The Yellow Book' and 'The Savoy,' as well as the worse, were full of them." For years after the boom of the 'nineties and the following decade publishers fought very shy of short stories in book form. They had ceased to be a novelty and the public soon demonstrated its lack of appreciation.

Then there has been the pernicious practice of issuing collections of stories by well known novelists. The publisher is hardly to blame for this, since what usually occurred—and unhappily continues to occur—is that the author, having written and published, probably on the strength of his reputation as a novelist, a number of magazine stories, collects them together and brings them to his publisher for publication in volume form. The publisher, being anxious not to offend his valuable author, agrees to publish them. This practice, while of immediate benefit to the author, if not to the publisher (who, in point of fact, often incurs an actual loss by publishing them), has positively injured the short story market. For it is true enough that the average novelist's attempt at a short story is nothing more nor less than a "pot-boiler," and the public is sensible enough to fight shy of a 7s. 6d. collection of pot-boilers. Besides, the reader has probably come across one or more of the said stories in magazine form and promptly resents the duplication, especially when he is asked to pay so much more for it. Very few ordinary magazine stories are worthy of the honour of book form, and if only authors

and publishers generally had been wise enough in the past to recognise this fact, we should nowadays hear considerably less of the prejudice against volumes of short stories. The truth is that the short story is an individual and rare art, entirely different from that of the novel. Happily, the situation is now improving, and the next few years may yield better prospects for good short stories in book form.

To return to the novel, it may be useful to examine briefly the various types of story which are likely to find a market at the present time. The following chapter contains a survey of many different types of novel, which may be illuminating to the young author, who, while conscious of the desire to write, is rather vague about the form his literary expression should take. It is, however, essential to realise two fundamental truths, (1), that it is practically useless to attempt to write an uncongenial type of novel, however strong may be one's desire to produce something saleable; and (2), that what may be marketable to-day may be commercially worthless to-morrow, and *vice versa*.

CHAPTER II

THE MODERN NOVEL (*continued*)

IF an analysis were taken of all the novels published every year it would be found that the love interest was so strongly represented that in any survey of different types of the modern novel, pride of place must undoubtedly be given to the love story. Jane Austen, it will be remembered, once defined a novel as "a smooth tale, generally of love."

We have already seen how important is the emotional appeal to the reader, and this is reflected in the love romances which crowd the bookstalls and fill the shelves at the libraries. The demand for this type of novel is therefore so wide that the novelist who wishes his books to become a commercial success can rarely afford to overlook so profitable a field.

The love story is not so easy to write as would appear at first sight. The novice is apt to imagine that, provided all ends happily on the last page, when hero and heroine duly fall into each other's arms, that the chief requirements of the love story have been fulfilled. It is not so simple as all that. Indeed, the number of successful authors in this branch of literature is surprisingly small, and for every one that succeeds there are a hundred whose work never gets beyond the "remainder" shelves.

An analysis of published romances will show that

this type of novel falls into two clearly distinguishable categories. The first group may be described as novels of sentiment; the second more properly belongs to the realistic school. From a commercial point of view the former is unquestionably the more popular. In fact, many well-known novelists, in discussing the subject, have expressed their surprise that there should be such an enormous public for novels which are so artificially sentimental that they bear absolutely no relation to real life. Yet it is so. The reader—who, it is important to remember, is always the most important factor in relation to any book—is so obviously prepared to meet the author more than halfway that no writer need hesitate to put on paper situations which could never possibly happen in real life, and may confidently portray characters indescribably puppet-like. If anyone is inclined to doubt this statement, let him ask himself whether he has ever met, or is ever likely to meet, any human being like the characters—let us say without offence—in Miss Ethel M. Dell's books.

Whether it is possible to teach oneself or to be taught how to produce a successful novel on these lines is very doubtful. I am inclined to think that it is impossible. A curious, albeit a very valuable, instinct seems to be responsible for fiction of this character. Quite recently there has been an instance of an extraordinarily successful sentimental story written by an author who was still in her 'teens, and who could scarcely be expected to have any real knowledge or experience of life.

If the budding author can turn his hand congenially to fiction of this kind, it is very probable that he will find publishers eventually bidding for his books, as the demand is greatly in excess of the supply.

To dismiss the sentimental novel as "tripe" has

always seemed to me to be foolish affectation—often inspired, I cannot help thinking, more by envy than any real appreciation of the true underlying significance of its appeal. The author who regards his work as a business proposition certainly ought not to neglect so large a section of the public. The first duty of a writer is, after all, to entertain his public; and if so many readers desire to be entertained by the purely sentimental novel there is no reason why the books which satisfy their tastes should be despised.

It may be fashionable to decry popular taste, and to lament the fact that the public displays such a keen appreciation of stories of a low literary level, but the fact remains; and while it is to be deplored that the intellectual stimulus of this type of story is practically nil, the influence that it exercises is, at any rate, wholesome enough, and certainly less pernicious than the salacious and unpleasant novel which unhappily makes so frequent an appearance nowadays in print.

The realistic type of love story is more representative of life, and consequently less popular in its appeal. The success of some books, and the failure of others, makes it only too apparent that what the public as a whole want is not novels that represent life realistically, but novels which portray it in brighter and more artificial colours.

There is always, however, an aspect to be considered besides the merely commercial significance of a book, and no one expects authors who take their art seriously to abandon their conception of the novel in favour of more popular methods. In any case, such authors would almost certainly fail in the attempt. The novelist can only write what he sincerely feels; and beyond pointing out that the realist cannot, in the nature of things, anticipate so big a commercial success as his

more sentimental competitor, little that is useful can really be said. It is outside the province of this cursory examination of certain types of novel to attempt to instruct any writer in the art or science of producing any given type of book. Indeed, it would be impossible. I can only hope, roughly, to indicate the commercial potentialities of each in turn.

The adventure story next demands consideration. This type of novel is naturally more masculine in its appeal; and here again the average man's desire temporarily to escape from the monotony of his everyday existence is well reflected. The vicarious enjoyment of a wild west thriller is easily explicable in these over-civilised days. Open-air stories thus have a steady popularity. Indeed, the novelist who can establish a reputation in this branch of fiction can look forward to a career which, in point of sustained prosperity, will eclipse that of the novelist in any other sphere. The novels of authors like Sir H. Rider Haggard, Jack London, Zane Grey, Edison Marshall and J. Oliver Curwood sell steadily year in and year out. The demand for good adventure stories may be judged by the fact that the demand in the American market alone for the books of one popular British adventure writer is large enough for an annual edition of one thousand sets of his books to be printed and sold year after year.

Here again the demand is far in excess of the supply, and the author who can turn out the type of adventure or open-air story which appeals to this very considerable public is assured of a lucrative career. From a technical point of view the adventure story is not difficult to write, and although imagination plays an important part, it is probably true that the majority of successful adventure story writers draw very largely on their own experiences

in writing their books. This points to an essential quality in stories of this type. So much depends upon the realistic nature of the incidents and adventures described that it is tempting providence for the novice to sit down in the optimistic expectation that he will rival the popularity of Zane Grey. The public for "a man's book" is perhaps the most loyal public of all; but it has a very keen eye for discrepancies in local colour and none but the experienced adventurer can hope to present a convincing picture of the exciting side of life.

Stories of the sea also come into this category. The steady popularity of writers like Clark Russell, "Bartimeus," Austin J. Small ("Seamark"), and, of course, Joseph Conrad, provides a useful pointer for the young writer with any experience of the sea and ships. Here again a real knowledge of the subject is absolutely indispensable. At the same time there is plenty of room for new authors in this profitable field. Over and over again it can be seen how specialisation pays and once a writer can establish a public for books and stories of this kind he can be sure of a steady income for many years.

The detective story is closely allied to the adventure and open-air story. It appeals mainly to the public that enjoys a rattling good story, full of excitement and action. The chief ingredient in the detective story, and in its first cousin, the mystery story, is suspense. A good plot is essential; on the other hand fine writing is neither necessary nor desirable. There is the same large and loyal public awaiting the writer of entertaining detective or mystery stories. For many years many thousands of appreciative readers have enjoyed and continue to enjoy the stories of such successful exponents of the art as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Maurice Leblanc (creator of *Arsène Lupin*), Paul Gaboriau, Edgar Wallace,

Agatha Christie, Isabel Ostrander (who, in her lifetime, produced—under her own name and four different *noms de plume*—ten highly successful detective and mystery novels annually), Phillips Oppenheim, Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, G. K. Chesterton (with his creation of *Father Brown*), F. Britten Austin, "Sapper," John Buchan and many others.

The detective story is very much more difficult to write than the ordinary adventure story. It has two essential requirements—an ingenious plot which can sustain the reader's interest until the last few lines, and an outstanding character which can grip the imagination of the reader. Very few writers succeed in achieving both these desiderata. Any magazine editor will tell you how difficult it is to obtain really effective detective stories. The average writer fails completely as a rule, because the strain of inventing a series of ingenious complications, and at the same time of presenting a forceful personality that captures the reader's imagination, proves too much for his literary powers. If I had to nominate one type of novel or series of stories which provides the most promising openings for new writers I should unhesitatingly declare for the detective story.

Some remarkably successful detective and mystery stories have been written by authors who have won their spurs with books of a very different type. Notable examples of these in recent years are "The Grey Room," by Eden Phillpotts; "The Red House Mystery," by A. A. Milne; "The Florentine Dagger," by Ben Hecht; "The Death of a Millionaire," by G. D. H. Cole; and "The Viaduct Murder" by Father Ronald A. Knox. The point is worth mentioning as indicating the relative ease with which an able or experienced writer can turn to the detective story with satisfactory results.

As a result of the war there has undoubtedly been a great increase in the demand for adventure and detective stories. The social upheaval of the war and the monotony of service at home and abroad both created and encouraged the book-reading habit ; and of all types of book there was none more popular among the troops than the novel we are now discussing. Even the Prime Minister of that day is stated on reliable authority to have read detective stories for one hour each day, however immersed he may have been in affairs of State. And the late President Roosevelt openly confessed his fondness for the detective story.

Turning next to the humorous novel we find once more the demand much greater than the supply. The good humorous story is a rare bird. A sense of humour is notoriously a very uncertain quantity ; what will convulse one reader with mirth will leave another painfully cold. The problem which confronts the humorous writer is to present the precise blend of humour which will appeal to people in the mass—a very difficult thing to do. Of all the storyteller's gifts the ability to write a funny story is perhaps the most valuable. There is no royal road to success in this department ; the proof of the pudding is in the eating. But the amateur who fondly imagines that it's a comparatively simple matter to sit down and reel off a humorous story is going to be speedily disillusioned. The only sound advice one can give the would-be writer of humour is not to persevere if the result is not a spontaneous success—in the judgment of other people. The small but select band of successful humorists—W. W. Jacobs, Stephen Leacock, "Saki" (H. H. Munro), A. A. Milne, P. G. Wodehouse, Ben Travers—may be taken as both an encouragement and a warning : to the genuine new humorist a handsome

return for his work, and to the unlucky recruit—grievous disappointment.

The psychological novel—about which we used to hear so much—has rather fallen from grace in the last year or two. The study of the motives which actuate men and women is naturally a subject of unfailing interest to the intelligent reader, but the success of what is rather loosely labelled the psychological novel depends so largely on convincing characterisation that only in the hands of a master of the novelist's art can it hope to prove effective. Psychological studies without the framework of a good story are apt to be tedious and only a gifted craftsman can be expected to combine the two.

Scarcely anything is heard nowadays of the "problem" novel which, in the 'nineties, had such a great vogue. The older generation will remember the sensation then caused by Sarah Grand's "Heavenly Twins." The problem novel illustrated the inevitable reaction against Victorianism, which, in its turn, has passed away. To the student of fiction, the problem novel is interesting, however, as having dealt the death-blow to the old three volume novel.

A type of novel which, although it reproduces the earliest form of published fiction, is probably destined to flourish perennially, is the picaresque novel. As no complication of plot, no artificial handling of suspense or situations is allowable, merely a plain narration of events in chronological order, this type of story depends more on the interest of its subject matter than on treatment. One of the best modern examples is Mr. Compton Mackenzie's "Sinister Street." In a sense the picaresque novel is the nearest approach to true realism, since incidents may follow each other in the inconsequential manner of real life. It is not an easy form to handle successfully.

The reader has to be intensely interested in the story's characters—no easy thing to sustain for nearly three hundred pages.

The romance, although often attempted, is rarely successful in the hands of the novice. In the effort to achieve originality of theme or plot, the beginner is often tempted to try his hand at the purely imaginative story. The incredibility of a story is not the reason for the failure of the majority of such attempts; indeed, the reader is perfectly willing to accept any hypothesis, however fantastic, if subsequent events in the story are consistent with the original conception. He will cheerfully project himself into another world, or will readily believe in the existence of fictional ghosts or weird creatures in expectation of a satisfying story. The writer's difficulties are obvious. He may have the requisite imagination, but he must be able to control it in a logical way, as well as to give it expression. The classic romances of Mr. H. G. Wells—"The War of the Worlds," "The Time Machine," "The Wonderful Visit" and the rest—illustrate the difficulties as well as the possibilities of this form. The publisher usually has an open mind in regard to stories of this type.

The historical novel is something of a paradox at the present time. On the one hand there is so little demand for historical novels that only a few publishers will consider them in manuscript form; on the other hand, there are the outstanding successes of authors like Mr. Rafael Sabatini, Mr. Jeffery Farnol, Miss Marjorie Bowen, and Sir H. Rider Haggard. Nevertheless, the historical novel is temporarily out of favour. One possible explanation of its decline is the comparative excitement of the times in which we live. In more leisured days the historical novel will probably attain greater popularity.

An increased interest in social problems, and a deeper realisation of the common difficulties of humanity, caused by the upheaval of the war, is no doubt responsible for the popularity of novels which reflect the wider aspect of human difficulties. A best-selling novel like "The Middle of the Road," must have touched a responsive chord in the hearts of very many thousands of people. The novel which is merely propaganda stands little chance of success. But the novel which, in the form of a story worth reading for its own sake (the point deserves emphasis), throws light on the problems of humanity is likely to win a large number of readers. We are no longer living in a state of superficial peace and contentment. Civilisation has come unstuck, and there is a hearing for the writer who can effectively utilise one of the many social and other problems which engage widespread attention to-day.

The sporting novel logically belongs to the group of adventure and kindred novels, but is worth special attention. There is a very much bigger public for novels with a sporting theme than many writers realise. Special emphasis must again be laid on the importance of getting one's local colour right in every detail. No writer of racing stories has any chance of real success unless his details are absolutely correct. And it is fatally easy to go wrong unless one has a thorough knowledge of the subject. One quite eminent novelist who attempted and published a racing yarn a few years ago made his hero run a four-year-old gelding in the Derby—a howler which would either amuse or disgust any turf enthusiast. On the other hand, those writers who know the ground can and usually do turn their hand with advantage to the writing of sporting novels. Nat Gould had an enormous public; it is still there awaiting his successor.

In the realm of boxing fiction T. C. Wignall and Andrew Soutar (and, of course, Conan Doyle with his "Rodney Stone") are conspicuously successful; as are the football stories of Sydney Horler, E. C. Buley, the racing novels of J. Crawford Fraser, Countess Barcynska, Edgar Wallace, and E. C. Buley; the hunting yarns of Whyte Melville, G. E. Somerville, Dorothea Conyers and others. For those who can handle such themes effectively the sporting novel is a tempting proposition.

Juvenile fiction is in a class by itself. Only a very small proportion of the stories for children that are written ever find their way into print. It is curious how many amateur writers embark on their literary careers with this unpromising material. It is difficult to place, often impossible; and the prices paid are often absurdly low. And although it may appear a simple matter to write a story which will appeal to children, it is in reality very difficult. A few publishers specialise in "juveniles," but outside this number there is practically no market for them. The majority of children's stories are bought for an outright payment, which is not encouraging to the author. Serial rights, however, are sometimes valuable, although respectable rates are the exception rather than the rule.

The war novel is an interesting illustration of the difficulty of overcoming the prejudices of publishers once they are formed. As was only to be expected, a strong reaction against war stories set in a year or two after the Great War and the pendulum is only just beginning to swing back. The same obstinate prejudice has prevailed for the past few years among theatrical managers and magazine editors. Yet the first war play to be produced in the post-war period—"Havoc"—was an instant success. Incidentally, it is noteworthy that film

producers did not share the view of publishers and theatre managers, as witness the production—and, more significant, the success—of war films like "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," "Enemies of Women," etc. It is, however, almost certain that the war novel is on the point of returning to favour. I feel sure that several notable novels of the war will be published within the next year or two. So far the war has produced only a few outstanding novels—Gilbert Frankau's "Peter Jackson," Wilfred Ewart's "Way of Revelation," perhaps H. G. Wells's "Mr. Britling Sees It Through," "The Spanish Farm" by R. H. Mottram; Cecil Roberts's "Scissors," of which the vivid last chapters entitle it to inclusion; in America "Three Soldiers," by John dos Passos; and in France, Barbusse's "Le Feu." There is a wonderful opportunity awaiting the unknown writer inspired by the war.

There are many other types of novel which necessarily elude even the vague classification attempted in the foregoing pages. Indeed, the novel is not something that can be labelled and tucked away into a convenient box. Publishers and booksellers do however attempt some such classification, more for purposes of convenient reference than anything else. Provided this is understood there can be no harm in roughly indicating, as I have tried to do, the prospects of each type of novel in turn. Innumerable novels defy classification and of these it can only be said that they must stand or fall on their merits as novels. The novel is nowadays so elastic a form of expression that the designation covers with equal readiness the autobiography of a charwoman or the story of a man's life told backwards. The word novel may mean anything.

To realise how unwise it would be to attempt to

dogmatise about any particular type of novel, one has only to recall an observation once made by an eminent publisher. In 1896, the late Mr. John Lane declared that "the sex novel was played out" !

A word is necessary about the "first novel." The risks of publishing a novel by a new and unknown author are greater to-day than ever before, but it is an encouraging indication of the real earnestness of publishers that the promising first novelist is most eagerly sought after. The novelist who makes more than say, forty or fifty pounds out of his first effort may be reckoned fortunate. It is the possibilities latent in his future work which tempt the publisher to speculate—for in nine cases out of ten it is speculation—in a "first novel." Some publishers are more interested in first novels than others and the writer should use discrimination in submitting the first product of his typewriter.

So many of the first novels which are submitted to publishers have shown a tendency to fall short of the customary novel length that a cautionary word is necessary. The average length of the 7s. 6d. novel is about 75,000 words. Seventy thousand words should be regarded as a minimum ; most publishers prefer novels not longer than about 100,000 words, but if a book runs to 120,000 words even, its length does not put it out of court. Which shows that while the publisher will accept a novel longer than the average, in spite of the necessarily increased cost of production, a novel which falls under the average total of words is unwelcome—for this reason—he cannot sell it. Novels are published at the uniform price of 7s. 6d., and the bookseller insists on "bulk." Authors would have an eye-opener if they watched the bookseller "buying." He looks first at the author's name and the publisher's imprint, then the title

and the jacket, but never omits to note the "bulk" or thickness of the book, and the size of print and margins. If the number of pages falls short of the average or the type is unusually large, he has very little use for that particular book. The actual story is of minor interest.

This prejudice is really fundamentally sound. The public, too, like "value for money," and many readers will neither buy nor borrow from their library a book which they can see will not provide a full quota of reading entertainment. This applies particularly to books by comparatively unknown authors, so that it is important for the novice to understand the necessity for writing a "full" book.

Occasionally a 40,000 word novel is published—usually at 3s. 6d. in the first instance—but this as a rule proves to be the type of story which can be labelled a "book-stall" book as opposed to a "library" book—a novel of wild west adventure, for instance, which people are more likely to buy at a railway bookstall than put down on their library lists.

What the future holds is a subject for speculation. Mr. Stacy Aumonier, who is a novelist as well as a recognised master of the art of the short story, is entitled to his interesting point of view :

I think we may assert without fear of contradiction that a long work is not necessarily a profound work. A Tanagra statuette may be more beautiful and profound in thought, feeling and emotion than one of those monster conceptions of Mestrovic, or even than the Pyramids of Egypt. . . .

Mr. Galsworthy once told me that he considered that the most satisfactory length to express oneself in fiction is the story of between twenty and twenty-five thousand words. Now, coming from such an authority, this is an interesting pronouncement, and I venture to predict, having

seriously endeavoured to adjust Mr. Galsworthy's opinion to modern tendencies in fiction, that the next boom will be in stories of this length. It may not be for a year or two, but it will come. At the present time it is extremely difficult to be allowed to write such a story. Editors, publishers and literary agents are not used to it. They say: "But what's the good of this? It's too long for a story, and too short for a novel."

Well, it is up to them to find a way of dealing with it, for it is undeniably an excellent length for a work of fiction, and there is going to be a demand for it. Mr. Galsworthy himself and also Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling, have all written a number of stories of approximately this length.

It seems to be the length that lends itself to a *tour de force*. It gives the author the chance of getting more stuff into it, more actuality, than he is able to within the limitations of the short story. On the other hand, he is not tempted to be diffuse, as he so often is in a long novel. From the reader's point of view, it has one great recommendation. It is exactly the length to read between dinner-time and bed. It is more satisfactory to go to bed with the vivid impression of one story on your mind, rather than the confusing memory of four, or the tantalising impression of part of one."

In view of this prediction, it is interesting to note that at least two publishers are contemplating issuing a series of novels by well-known authors of about 20,000 words in length. But although this may be a future development, the new recruit will be well advised to stick to the full-length story under present market conditions.

CHAPTER III

THE BOOK MARKET

WHILE the novel may claim to be regarded as the most important of all the single groups into which books may be divided, both from the point of view of the number published each year, and the amount of interest devoted to fiction by the reading public, the field is almost as large for the writer of the non-fiction type of book. Indeed, in many ways the non-fiction market offers a wider choice and a more varied market than does the novel.

The non-fiction book, by which is meant all books that are not novels, may be sub-divided under ten separate heads. They are: (1), Memoirs or Reminiscences; (2), Biographies; (3), Belles-Lettres; (4), Travel and Topography; (5), Technical books; (6), Poetry; (7), Educational works; (8), Political; (9), Economics; and (10), Translations. These ten classes of books, with the obvious exception of poetry, may be said to have one thing in common—they are all examples of what may be called advanced journalism. In all of them the qualifications required are in one way or another the same qualifications indispensable to success in journalism—that is, the ability to describe scenes or incidents in the way best calculated to hold the reader's interest, a sense of news values—which is to the author what a sense of

proportion is to any human being—and, equally important, the knowledge that enables the writer to know what to leave out.

This last qualification is as important as knowing what to put in. Indeed, any experienced reviewer will probably agree with me that more otherwise good books have been spoilt because the author did not know what to leave out, than because vital facts were not put in. An important point left out is easily discernible to the practised eye, whereas the superfluous anecdote, the hoary chestnut in an otherwise admirable book of reminiscences, or the biography filled with trivial and largely uninteresting matter, often escapes the blue pencil and appears in print. The very fact that in most instances the non-fiction book possesses no "plot" worthy of the name makes this question more important. If the action flags in the middle of a novel, the first critic to whom the author turns for advice will detect the fault and it can be corrected, but in the case of books dealing with facts, or anecdotes, or the fruits of travel and exploration, to decide what is superfluous and what isn't is not so easy. For the author who is aiming at success in the non-fiction field, perhaps the best advice is indicated by the old Fleet Street adage "When in doubt—out." A story or point of argument never printed is never missed, whereas a story not up to the standard of the rest of a book, or an argument dragged in unnecessarily, may prejudice the reader and reviewer and materially affect the prospects of the book.

Before passing on to deal with the various types of non-fiction book in detail it must be pointed out that not all of these offer immediate results to the newcomer to literature. Memoirs and reminiscences form a class of work generally out of reach of the literary aspirant,

while in the case of the biography, this too is a field which may well be left until there are no other more promising forms of literary activity left to conquer. It is true that one young man wrote his reminiscences at the age of twenty, but the success of this precocious volume is the inevitable exception that proves the soundness of the rule which decrees that those who dabble in biographies and memoirs shall have a respectable measure of years and experience to their credit.

In the same way poetry must be left to poets, and even the most enthusiastic and talented writer must not expect to be able to take advantage of whatever scope this field offers unless he is one of those fortunate (or should it be unfortunate?) beings who, for some mysterious reason, are born with the magic gift of being able to write poetry.

Despite these limitations, however, every author who contemplates a literary career, or who is now engaged on one, would be well advised to make himself conversant with the whole field of non-fiction books, in order that he may know how wide the field is, and how far it is likely in the future that he may be able to enter it to his profit. If there is one thing true of authors as a body it is the fact that, in the words of the wit, if every writer could know what he was destined to write when first he put pen to paper, authorship would have been numbered among the dead arts centuries ago. It is the uncertainty of the developments of the day after tomorrow which gives to authorship much of its charm, and for that same reason no field of effort should be left unexplored by the aspirant for literary reputation.

Memoirs and reminiscences form a steadily growing class of non-fiction book. They may be written by anybody or nobody, providing always that that nobody

has mixed with the people who count, or in some way enjoyed unique experiences denied to most of us, and therefore interesting when set down in print. Principally, however, this type of book is the work of someone whose name is well known to the reading public. Famous politicians, doctors, authors, business men, sportsmen, soldiers, sailors, Civil Servants, travellers, clergymen, actors, war correspondents, lawyers—all these vocations have contributed to the successful memoirs and books of reminiscences published during recent years. To-day the great, and the nearly great, announce the coming of their reminiscences with an inevitableness that suggests that before long, with competition as keen as it is in the publishing world, the successful man or woman will sign a contract for what is usually a form of life story at an early age and thus be relieved of further worry, apart from the task of sitting down to produce the book when the joys of more strenuous activities have waned.

Indeed, this is what already happens in many cases. Miss Mary Pickford, the famous screen star, had signed a contract for her reminiscences with an American publishing house ten years ago, when, although famous, she had by no means achieved the position in the world of screen art that she occupies to-day. In the same way the modern Cabinet Minister accepts office knowing, and appreciating, that when his turn comes to "go into the wilderness" of opposition or retirement, there will be a ready market for the book in which he will tell the story of his stewardship, with such permissible brushing aside of the cloak of secrecy as may add a spice of interest to the record.

There are, of course, some lucky people who are assured of success before they sit down to write the first chapter of their memoirs or their reminiscences. Lord

Curzon would have been reasonably sure of receiving a sum totalling something like £10,000 for the serial and book rights of any such volume he might have been induced to write. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is stated, with good authority, to have received a sum equal to the record rate of half-a-crown a word for the British serial rights of his reminiscences. Lord Birkenhead, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Winston Churchill, famous figures such as these are not likely to know the meaning of failure if and when they decide to tell the story of their views of men, women and things for the benefit of the reading public.

But these distinguished authors are in a privileged class. For years they have been in the limelight. The public knows them and is eager to know how much they know in turn. So a publisher is justified in preparing a big first edition of any book they write. For the comparatively unknown writer the task is not so easy, nor the reward so great.

Anyone who has a story to tell, and can tell it in an interesting fashion, can write a novel. In the same way, anyone whose life has been interesting in a way denied to the average man and woman, is qualified, given the necessary writing ability, to write his or her reminiscences, but the material must be there—it cannot be manufactured or invented. An interesting life spent in contact with interesting and famous people is a first essential. So is either a good memory for details, or a carefully kept diary. Nothing is so damaging to an otherwise good book of reminiscences or memoirs as vagueness. If the book is sufficiently interesting to attract the very large public which appreciates life at second-hand in this form, then the monetary results will be well worth while. Most books of this description are published at from

10s. 6d. to 42s., a price which, on a royalty basis, will well repay the author for the amount of research work necessary to compile from 75,000 to 100,000 words of interesting material.

Of all types of non-fiction books, memoirs make the greatest appeal to the majority of publishers. If you have any notion that in the years to come you may want to give your story to the world, start keeping a diary to-day. A little time spent in collecting material while it is fresh in the mind may save months of research and reflection in the years to come—and enable the author finally to crown his literary achievements by a successful book of reminiscences.

Biographies offer a wider field, and one which the young writer can enter on equal terms. Whether or not a famous figure in public life has written a volume of memoirs or reminiscences during his lifetime, it is probable that a biography covering his whole life will appear after his death. In many cases such a biography could not be written except by a writer who has the privilege of access to the letters, documents and other material left by the subject of the book, and also to family records needed to piece together the early and obscure beginnings of someone who later became a famous personality. But there are other famous men—statesmen and politicians for example—whose whole lives, apart from a few early years, are lived in the full glare of publicity. A complete collection of press cuttings concerning these men and women would furnish, with a few intimate touches such as any friend could supply, an almost complete biography of their lives. Here is the opportunity for the young writer in this field. As an example I may recall the somewhat surprising fact that when Mr. Ramsay MacDonald became the first Socialist Prime Minister of

Great Britain, very few people knew more about him, outside the Labour movement itself, than the fact that he was a Scot, who had for a time been rather unpopular on account of his anti-war activities. A Fleet Street journalist, whose work had brought him into contact with Mr. MacDonald, and who had for some time past carefully studied the life of the Socialist leader with an eye on the possibility of good "copy" at some future date, set to work and in a week produced a really excellent biography of the Prime Minister. This was duly published in a Sunday newspaper and afterwards in book form, and the results well repaid the journalist-author for his work.

It is, I believe, a fact that what was by far the best biography of the ex-Kaiser to appear in this country was also the work of an author who had collected his material from afar without any intimate knowledge of his subject. The war came, and he wrote the book, which went into several editions in a few weeks.

These are examples of the biography which deal with a living person. Where it is a life-story in the real sense, and the subject is dead, the task is harder, and generally, in the absence of special access to the necessary documents, or a very close and longstanding friendship, it is better left alone. It is not a field which offers as much promise of financial reward as many others in the non-fiction market, but a good biography, sympathetically and worthily treated, is an achievement well worth while, and, for that reason alone, a branch of activity open to every writer which should not be neglected.

Under the heading of Belles-Lettres is included sketches, essays, reviews, and letters on art, literature, and life. This is a field which it is difficult to enter. Generally speaking, either a name familiar to the more discriminating section of the reading public, or a style

and diction calculated to win respect on its merits, is needed to obtain recognition. But once this is achieved Belles-Lettres offer wide possibilities both in profit and prestige. An example of a modern writer who has won substantial recognition in this field of non-fiction books is Mr. E. V. Lucas, whose essays, travel sketches and criticisms on art and kindred topics have a wide sale both in this country and America, and have so deservedly increased that delightful writer's reputation. Another essayist who has won an enduring niche in the affections of the readers of this class of literature is Mr. G. K. Chesterton, whose work needs no detailed description from me. Hilaire Belloc, A. G. Gardiner ("Alpha of the Plough"), and T. P. O'Connor are other names which come to mind of writers whose contributions to the Belles-Lettres of our days not only will live after many modern novels are forgotten, but prove that this somewhat highly specialised field is wellworth the consideration, if only on commercial grounds, of any author who is determined to take his work seriously, and to leave no class of book unconsidered which may increase his reputation or his income.

A much larger section is that covered by the book dealing with travel and topography. To-day it would seem that everyone of us is either a traveller, or a reader of travel books. At all events the number of such books published in this country is becoming steadily larger year by year, and more and more of the "best sellers" among non-fiction books belong to this type of book.

It is obvious that first-hand knowledge of the subject dealt with is essential before a travel book can be attempted. It is useless to sit at home and try to write a book about the Solomon Islands, or the Tekel Makan Desert of Northern China. Sincerity and accuracy in

detail are the outstanding requirements of the travel book, and without these success is more than doubtful. Assuming, however, that the author has lived for some years abroad, there is hardly a spot on the earth's surface that will not, treated in the right way, yield a fascinating book for the stay-at-home public. A good travel book, especially if it is well illustrated with either photographs or sketches, or both, is also reasonably sure to find a publisher, without as great an effort as is often required in the case of other types of books. Wireless, aviation, education, all these things are helping to make the world smaller, and to increase therefore the interest which the reading public take in other parts of the universe in which they live. Louis de Rougemont created a sensation with his remarkable stories of life in Northern Australia (since justified by the evidence of the moving picture camera) because no one else had been there and seen what he had seen.

That spirit of curiosity is more alive than ever to-day. In spite of the increased cost of the illustrated book since the war, the demand for books dealing with the romance of such parts of the globe as Unknown Africa, the South Seas, the Dominions, the Amazon, Northern Canada, and the Far East is still greater than the supply. It can almost be said that no really well-written and informative travel book is to-day a failure—no matter what part of the world it deals with there is a public somewhere for it. But to win that public the author must do his duty. Exaggeration, invention, padding—these tendencies must be sternly suppressed. The book must be a faithful and full picture of life in the country concerned, illustrated wherever possible with actual photographs or drawings that confirm or support the text. A good travel book of this description is usually assured of a large sale in

the United States as well as in this country, and more than one now successful author's name first became known, for journalistic purposes at least, through the appearance of a book of this nature.

Allied to the travel book dealing with one country is the book that deals with none particularly, but rather with the reminiscences of the author as a rolling stone, travelling the world at large, and winning experience as the fruit of many adventures in strange lands. The market for this type of book is as large as that open to the travel book proper, but it is not a market which is open to every author, for the obvious reason that it would not be possible or profitable for a writer to spend two or three years of his life drifting round the world in order to write such a book. Unless, therefore, his experience has lain in unexpected places, and the material is ready to his hand the beginner would be well advised to pass over the travel book, merely noting its possibilities in order that if, on some future occasion, he gains a first hand knowledge of more or less unknown parts of the world, he may turn that knowledge to practical account.

The wide range of books grouped together under the general heading of technical books also form a market which is dominated by the specialist. It is useless for the uninformed to attempt to prepare a book dealing with, say, wireless or printing. Nevertheless, it is a market which should be cultivated by those who possess the necessary knowledge. An author who some years ago wrote what is now a favourite history book for school use has for many years past been receiving an annual payment for royalties of nearly £500 a year. This is but one example of the outstanding attraction which the technical book has to the writer able to compete in this

field—that is a steady sale which may continue for years if the book is not of a nature which puts it out of date in a few months.

Just as every one who is anyone could write at least one book of reminiscences, so nearly every writer is the master of one subject which might be turned into a technical book. Wireless, tennis, cricket, dancing, football, motoring, gardening, engineering, photography, spiritualism—there is no end to the possible subjects for technical books, as is shown by the steady stream of these publications which flow from the printing presses to-day. But, to sound a note of warning, publishers usually demand a well-known “name” on the title page of books of this type—a name already associated with the subject in the minds of the public.

And there is a surprisingly large public for this class of book. Sales totalling 50,000 and even 100,000 in the case of the cheaper books, are comparatively common, while surprisingly large profits have been earned over and over again from the serial and other rights of these books.

Poetry is perhaps the most highly specialised class of non-fiction book. *Poeta nascitur non fit*. An author is either a poet or he isn't. There is a tendency on the part of many modern writers to dismiss poetry with a shrug of the shoulders, or a suggestion that poetry and poverty go well together. Yet it must be remembered that Mr. Rudyard Kipling has made nearly as much out of poetry as he has made out of prose, while such authors as John Masefield, John Drinkwater, and Sir Henry Newbolt have probably made far more. Even so shrewd a judge of the modern public as Mr. Gilbert Frankau has deemed it worth his while to turn to poetry upon occasion, as witness that notable novel in verse “One

of Us," which added to his already high reputation when it appeared a few years ago. But from a strictly commercial point of view, poetry to-day yields practically no dividends.

Following the war there was a "boom" in poetry—at least that was what it was called by some enthusiastic critics. But the only effect of the boom, if there ever was one, was that certain publishers became a little more inclined to publish books of poems at their own risk instead of making the author pay to see his work in print, and recouping him on a royalty basis. To-day it is not always necessary for a poet of any distinction to pay for the publication of his work. If a poet has a certain reputation, or is spoken of as "a coming man," it is possible to find a publisher who will run the risk of launching him. But the field is limited and precarious.

Some interesting facts and figures concerning the commercial side of poetry recently appeared in an illuminating article in the *Evening Standard*. I quote the following significant passage :

Let me take one concrete instance, in which I have the facts from the author's own mouth. Of the merits of his work I will say nothing ; I will keep as closely as possibly to facts. He is a man of about thirty. He has three or four volumes of verse to his name, for the publication of none of which has he incurred any risk. He is to be found in the usual books of reference. Specimens of his work are reproduced in most of the anthologies. When he writes a poem he can generally, though not always, obtain a fee for it from some magazine. His name is fairly well known to those interested in literature. He is, that is to say, a reasonably successful member of his profession—which term I use to keep well on the prosaic side of my subject. There are those who do better financially, but I should think that here he is above the average, and these are his receipts for last year :

	£	s.	d.
To royalties from books already published	3	12	0
To fees for publication in periodicals :			
1 poem at £5			
1 poem at £4			
8 poems at £2 2s. each			
2 poems at £2 each			
1 poem at £1 10s.			
	3	1	6
To fees for publication in anthologies :			
7 poems at £2 2s. each	14	14	0
To fees for poems set to music :			
2 poems at £2 2s. each	4	4	0
To receipts from anthologies published on a profit-sharing base	9	18	0
	<u>£63</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>0</u>

And every three years or so he will publish a new collection of verses, from which he will get in royalties, at the first go-off, about £15. If we distribute this at the rate of £5 per annum, his yearly earnings from the writing of verse (or, as he would say, poetry) amount to £68 14s.

I will not attempt to apportion this under the headings of rent, heat and light, washing, etc. As a matter of fact, my friend does not support himself, let alone his wife, on a yearly income of £68 14s. But to support himself at all one of two things is necessary. Either he must have an independent income—and in an illogical world this is not an inevitable accompaniment of poetic talent—or he must have some other and more remunerative occupation.

There you have a lucid summary of the opportunities open to the aspiring poet who seeks literary honours—and profit—by the writing of verse. There is a market for poetry, but it is a restricted market, with few opportunities of material success. Whether the artistic satisfaction of self-expression is sufficient reward for the labour involved is a question which every author contemplating the practice of the poetic art must decide

for himself. But, if money is the attraction, then it is undoubtedly possible for any writer whose work is worth printing to secure bigger rewards for less expenditure of effort elsewhere in the literary field.

Turning to the educational field, we are considering a wide market about which surprisingly little is known by the average writer. And yet this branch of non-fiction has one outstanding recommendation from the point of view of the young author. The demand for educational books is probably more constant than is the case in any other field. There are no booms and slumps facing the specialist who has won a market for his wares in the schools, colleges and homes of Great Britain. There is always a next generation to follow the last one, always the same "continuous urge," as Mr. H. G. Wells has called it, towards knowledge. It naturally follows, therefore, that the market for instructional books does not grow smaller; indeed, it expands with the population.

The educational book, whether it is of the "popular" variety or not, is rarely a "best-seller" in the sense of running through five or six editions in as many months. In a conservative market it takes time to win your place as a writer of worth—time and a passion for accuracy down to the smallest detail. But if it were possible to compile a list of the fifty biggest sellers among books in this country, with the number of copies of each sold, the average author would be surprised to discover how many educational works figured in the list. Such standard works as H. G. Wells's "Outline of History" and Green's "History of England" have established their position in the ranks of the books that help to make the man, and these books enjoy a steady sale year after year, and will prove vigorous sellers years after the

meteoric novel published on the same day has sold its five or ten, or even twenty thousand copies and, its little day over, passed into the limbo of forgotten books.

Not every author, of course, is able to write books of an educational or even informative nature. More than any other type of book, the text-book must be impartial—even judicial—in its handling of facts, sincere in its tone, and have a fine sense of proportion. Anything in the nature of hurried or slipshod work will effectually deprive the book of any chance it might have. Moreover, it is of vital importance that those who write to instruct, rather than to amuse, should have a very complete knowledge of their subject, and beyond that knowledge a vision of the lesson which they desire to present to their readers. The educational market is, in other words, a very exacting, possibly the most exacting market. Nevertheless, it is a field in which there are rich rewards for those who enter it and make good. A book that once succeeds in attracting the public will frequently sell steadily for ten or twenty years, earning substantial royalties for the author long after he has settled down to write the more up-to-date volume which will supersede it.

The political book may consist of reminiscences, biography, educational material, or the volume dealing frankly with some specific problem or series of problems which engage the attention of the politicians of the day. The first three of these classes have already been dealt with at length in this chapter, so I will not discuss them further beyond saying that in spite of the alleged flagging interest in the labours of Parliament, there is no subject so sure of a public as politics of any sort. It is obvious to anyone that if a Chancellor of the Exchequer wrote a book entitled "How to Abolish the Income Tax "

and published it a week before the Budget speech was due, the only limit to the sales of the book would be the number of copies that could be printed and bound. To a lesser degree there is the same sure public for any political book that imparts expert knowledge, or sheds light on any subject which is politically topical or of genuine interest. Even the views of comparatively minor politicians are eagerly read by the large public which is "politically conscious," a fact which has encouraged publishers in many cases to charge prices for these books of political reminiscences which they could not successfully demand for any other type of book.

Whether the problem dealt with is great or small, however, and whether the writer is comparatively unknown or famous, it is essential that the book itself should be a comprehensive work on the subject under discussion. Books of a general nature, written without the most expert knowledge, will never make any author's reputation in the political market. A complete mastery of the subject is an essential qualification of every author before he undertakes such a task. The scope of politics is so vast to-day that even within the great political parties each subject is recognised as a specialist's province, with little groups of members detailed to make themselves conversant with the subject dealt with by their own group. No man is any longer expected to be an expert on, say, housing, Egypt, and the licensing laws at the same time. In the same way the writing of political books is a specialist's work that demands a detailed knowledge of both sides of a question and a highly developed art of presenting a case.

The best way to write a political book dealing with a controversial question is undoubtedly to make it a measured statement of facts, attractively presented, and,

after elaborating your views, leave the facts to speak for themselves. That sounds an easy matter, yet it is rarely so easy as it looks. It is said, for instance, that no man—not even Mr. Ramsay MacDonald himself—has yet been able to write a book on Socialism which will explain what the aims of British Socialists really are in language that the man in the street can understand. It is not that men like Mr. Robert Blatchford, Mr. Philip Snowden, Mr. W. H. Morris, the late Keir Hardie, and Mr. MacDonald himself—to mention only one or two writers who have written books on this subject—are unable to write. It is due to the simple fact that Socialism itself is so involved a project, meaning so many things to so many different people, that it is difficult to set down its aims in simple language.

When the miners were pressing their scheme for the nationalisation of the coal industry a few years ago, a number of books were written on the coal mining industry in this country, in the hope that the public would read them and thus gain a detailed knowledge of the facts upon which they could give a considered opinion upon the question. It is extremely doubtful, however, if any of the authors who wrote those books made as much money as they could have done by devoting half the time to popular journalism. But they were experts dealing with an expert subject, and if their sales were small the position attained by their books gave them a prestige which was useful to them in other directions.

The political book which has something to reveal, or some bitterly opposed policy to defend, is in a different category. This is, for the author lucky enough to possess the facts at the right moment, probably the safest and most profitable book of any type on the market. Secrets have always had, and probably always will have, a

ready sale, and Government secrets are no exception. Robert Blatchford's "Merry England," published in Britain and nine other countries before the war, is an example of this type of book. In the same way to-day, were this country suddenly to find itself threatened with a measure of Prohibition, a well written and detailed book on the whole question of the drink question, both in Britain and other countries, would almost certainly bring in substantial profits for its author.

It is obvious, however, that only those writers who are actively interested in politics, and have made themselves specialists in their subject, can hope to win either prestige or profit out of political books. It is, more than any other class of book, a market in which specialists cater for specialists, and where the lightest statement may be X-rayed under the fierce light that beats upon the party leaflet and the platform speech when a general election comes. A mis-statement, therefore, may not only be damaging to the author, but it may and probably will actually set back rather than advance whatever cause the author has at heart.

Before leaving the political book and turning to its cousin, the volume that deals with economic questions, I would draw the attention of the young author to an interesting fact. With the ever-increasing size of the electorate, amounting now practically to adult suffrage, there has arisen a demand for political books of a slightly more popular type. These books are really super-journalism dealing in a straightforward fashion with the various political problems of interest to the man in the street. They are not intended to be text-books for the election agent and speaker—they are aimed at the electorate itself in just the same way as the speeches made from time to time by the party leaders aim far beyond the

hall in which they are speaking, to the millions of voters who can be reached via the newspaper press. This is a type of political book for which there is likely to be a big future, and one that the author, shy of setting himself up as an expert for experts, might profitably keep in mind if his politics are of the vital and imperative type that sooner or later break out on paper.

Like the political book, economics is a subject not for every pen. A famous statesman once referred to decimals as "those damned dots." The writer on economic questions deals with little else but "damned dots" from the cradle to the grave. The economic book should not be dismissed for this reason, however, as a market offering no opportunities to the young writer who is prepared to take pains to master his subject. The world in which we live is a far more complicated and industrialised world than was the world of fifty years ago. In twenty years' time it will be more complicated and industrialised than ever. And the more complicated it becomes the greater will be the need for books explanatory of human society and where it is going wrong. The economic book has very aptly been described as "the guide book to industrial progress." Every year, every month, the trend of industrial development is slowly but surely changing. Now one trade is enjoying a boom, now another is suffering from a mysterious depression. It is the economist in his watch-tower who must read the signs that reveal the health of industry and give the facts to the world. And as the world, or most of it, lives by and on industry, it cannot afford to ignore the reasoned views of its prophets.

If a young author with a taste for statistics asked me to suggest the most profitable market to cultivate during the next ten years I should answer, "Economics,

economics, and again economics." The world of to-morrow will see the scientist and the economist leading human progress, guiding the deliberation of Governments and husbanding our trade and our prosperity for the benefit of all. A few years of study and the young writer will find himself on the threshold of an almost limitless field in which there are opportunities in plenty. Even to-day there are many writers who find it possible almost to confine their activities to this field, e.g., Mr. Harold Cox, Mr. J. M. Keynes, Mr. G. D. H. Cole, Sir Leo Chiozza Money, Mr. Hartley Withers, Mr. Philip Gee, and Mr. Emil Davies, to mention but a few representative names.

The economic book is especially interesting in that it offers an opportunity for writers with experience in industry to enter the literary field. Indeed, the greater their experience in the industrial field, both in this country and abroad, the greater the chance of success and a profitable career. That all economics are not for highbrows is proved by the success of "Eclipse or Empire," a book issued during the war by Samuel Turner and H. H. Grey, which had a widespread sale both in this country and the Dominions, or, to quote another school of economists, the books in which Mr. G. D. H. Cole, Mr. Sidney Webb, Mr. E. D. Morel and Mr. Norman Angel have presented Labour's views on economics in industry.

There remains one more field which may properly be included among the non-fiction books. I refer to translations of foreign books into the English language. During the past few years the interest in foreign books has been steadily growing, and, with that interest, the field for foreign books has widened until to-day it is almost a foregone conclusion that any really striking book published in France, Germany, Spain or Russia sooner or

later comes on to the English market, and in many cases scores a success. Here the qualifications required of the translator are obvious.

Before an author can contemplate this field of activity he must be conversant with not only the language of the country from which a book has come, but its methods of thought, its life and its philosophy, so that he may interpret not only the written word but the implied meaning of the book he is anxious to present to the British public. Translations of foreign books are too many and varied to mention more than a few, but notable examples of recent years include General Ludendorff's "War Memoirs," General von Bernhardt's book on the Next War, Karel Capek's brilliant play "R.U.R.," and from Spain the political writings as well as the novels, of Señor Vicente Blasco Ibáñez.

In translations everything depends upon the type of book it is proposed to translate. A popular work may be set down in the English language by a skilled journalist, whereas a technical or political book may need the skilled knowledge and practised hand of the expert. It is a limited field, but nevertheless an important, if not especially profitable one for the writer who possesses the necessary qualifications. It must be noted, however, that the free-lance's opportunities are limited by the publishers' practice of employing regular translators. The qualified translator should approach English publishers in the first instance. The usual arrangement is an outright fee paid to the translator by the English publisher.

Another arrangement is for the translator to obtain from the proprietor (author or publisher, as the case may be) the right for a certain period to make arrangements for publication in the English language, it being understood that in that period he would make his

translation, any payments resulting therefrom to be divided between the two parties. An alternative plan is for the translator to buy the rights in the work for an outright sum, but this is a big speculation under present conditions, and one which is not advisable, except in very exceptional circumstances, as the purchaser is liable to find himself landed with a book which no one wishes to publish.

The possibilities of syndicating extracts from any of the books surveyed in the foregoing pages should not be overlooked, as the disposal of such rights may add very considerably to the amount which the author may reasonably expect to receive for his work. The question of syndication, however, is more fully dealt with in a later chapter.

It must be remembered that there are many types of book—both fiction and non-fiction—for which it may be said that it is easier to find a public than a publisher. In the case of non-fiction books a careful study of the requirements of individual publishers will save much waste of time and useless effort. Advertisements and catalogues are readily available and provide a certain index to the varying needs of different publishing firms. From time to time, too, a certain type of book—to take a recent instance books on psychic subjects—will be found to be favoured by one publisher or another and the qualified author may profitably take advantage of such increased interest in any subject.

CHAPTER IV

AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER

AUTHORSHIP as a profession is in the melting pot. Every day we can see the art of literature being more securely harnessed to the chariot of commerce (or should it be the other way round?). The commercialisation of literature has inevitably reacted in curious ways. Authorship has attracted many speculators and adventurers, some inspired, no doubt, by the prospect of publicity, others, more optimistically, in the anticipation of large monetary reward. Authors are not what they were.

To-day there are probably more aspirants to literary fame than ever before. This increase in the number of authors and would-be authors would not be alarming if publishing were the simple straightforward business it was fifty years ago. But to-day the whole business of book publishing has become much more complicated.

In the old days the author wrote his book and took it to the bookseller, who combined the functions of publishing and selling books. For his labour the author usually received a lump sum and the simple transaction was complete. The book was manufactured and had only a comparatively local sale. To-day the commercial side of literature is bristling with complications. Territorial rights throughout the world, translation rights, dramatic

and film rights, serial rights, broadcasting, cheap edition rights—all have to be taken into consideration. A book is a business in itself and since the author is an active partner he should at least know something of the conditions which govern this particular business.

Very few authors understand the commercial side. Some prefer to remain almost entirely ignorant of all business details and concentrate on what they regard as the author's proper function, namely, to write. There is something to be said for this point of view, especially in view of the rise of the literary agent and the establishment of the Society of Authors, which can and do protect the business interests of authors who are prudent enough to take advantage of their expert services.

The author who wants to pursue his creative work, without being harassed by mathematics and complicated detail, usually employs a literary agent. A later chapter deals fully with the status and functions of the agent.

At the same time it is not an undesirable thing that the author should be able, if he so desires, to make himself acquainted with, at any rate, the rudiments of the commercial side, and it is the object of this book to survey the most important aspects from the author's point of view. It is hardly necessary to warn the reader that conditions change so rapidly that no book of this kind, however comprehensive, can hope to cover all the ground. With every year come fresh developments and complications.

The author of a book is, commercially, in a peculiar position. Although Dr. Johnson once declared that no one but a blockhead ever wrote except for money, it is undeniably true that many authors, if not entirely indifferent to the financial return from their books, regard the money they earn (or do not earn) as of relatively

little importance. On the other hand, writing is a profession, sometimes even a trade, and the author who is dependent on his literary income, or who is anxious to reap the maximum return from his books, should and often does attach great importance to the commercial aspect of book-writing. Between the two types of author stand the publisher and the literary agent. The publisher naturally ensures his profit so far as he can; he is above all a business man and when he publishes a book he usually does so in the expectation of making a profit—though not always, as we shall see. The profits from a book are divided between author and publisher, and only the keen competition which exists among publishers and the vigilance of the author's agent prevent some publishers from taking the lion's share. As it is, the author frequently makes more money out of a book than the publisher. But the point is that the publisher primarily protects his own interests and he can do this only at the expense of the author. The literary agent, although he represents the author's interests, is a busy man and cannot always afford the time to explain the different and complicated phases of the practical side of the business. The author usually has a draft agreement put in front of him for approval and signature, and knowing his agent to be a trustworthy man, signs it if advised to do so. Fundamentally, the author realises that the agent's interest and his own are identical. Nine authors out of ten take a contract on trust and most of them only learn by gradual experience the main features of the business.

This cannot be described as a healthy state of affairs. Let me state at once, lest any author imagines that the object of this book is merely to teach him how to extract more money from publishers and editors, that the true

state of affairs will probably surprise him. It is dangerous to jump to conclusions in the literary business.

For instance, the inexperienced author may believe that the publisher grabs all he can and leaves the author as little as possible. Also, he probably believes that the publisher "takes no risks." He will find that the publisher often earns considerably less than the author out of a book, although he (the publisher) is the capitalist in the partnership. In what other business does the capitalist or financier earn the smaller share? Then again, it is perfectly true that the publisher is sometimes willing to incur a definite loss on a book, if he decided that such a policy will benefit him in the long run. This is not due to any inherent philanthropic instinct in publishers—although it is gratifying, in a materialistic and selfish age, to be able to refer to publishers who are actuated by higher motives than those of financial gain—but, as I have already said, to the extraordinary keen commercial competition and personal rivalry which exists between publishers and to the authors and authors' agents who take advantage of it.

In spite of the inevitable uncertainties of their business, I repeat that publishers are often content to publish books without any prospect of immediate profit, and sometimes even at a loss. In view of my previous assertion that the publisher is primarily a business man, this may seem paradoxical, but in publishing it is necessary to look some way ahead, and a policy that foregoes immediate profit in the expectation of a bigger reward in the future is not commercially unsound. Few publishers, indeed, can show a profit in a year on the books actually published during that year. The majority make their money out of old books, reprints and cheap editions. But the new books of to-day are the old books

of to-morrow, and publishers willingly continue to issue new books and novels in the hope that they may find favour and continue to sell for an indefinite period. Initially, the author is likely to make more money out of a book than the publisher and although the author does not earn less per copy sold as sales increase (as royalties are usually on an increasing scale, he almost invariably makes more), the publishers earn relatively very much more after the sales of a book proceed beyond a certain figure. The cost of production—borne by the publisher in nearly every case—eliminates the possibility of the publisher's profit until a certain number of copies have been sold, whereas the author's profit, in the form of a royalty, nearly always begins with the first copy sold.

I stress this point, since many authors are apparently under a grave misapprehension concerning the relative profits of author and publisher.

In the case of a novelist, or an author of a non-fiction book, who is likely to produce further books, the same principle applies in rather a different way. A novelist, in particular, is in a sense a literary "property"; and, especially if the contract gives him an option on future books by the same author, the publisher will cheerfully incur a loss on the first book in the hope of recouping himself through the increased sales of subsequent books by that author. It often happens that a publisher, recognising the promise of a hitherto unknown writer, actually loses money on the early books which appear under his imprint, only to have the mortification of seeing a rival publisher reap where he has sown. This is very unfair, although it may be thought that the author is not unreasonable in blaming his first publisher for failing to market his previous books successfully. It is only because authors do not understand and appreciate the initial

difficulties that they sometimes desert the man who first recognised the quality or the promise of their work. It takes time to establish a literary reputation. The author who begins to "sell" with his first or second book is a lucky man indeed. As soon as he has a definite public other publishers will naturally be anxious to bid for his work. An author with a ready-made public is an acquisition to any publisher.

It is a comforting reflection that authors who thus turn their backs on the publishers who "discovered" them are, on the whole, in a minority. Whatever faults writers may have, loyalty is generally one of their virtues. One can point to many distinguished life-time associations between authors and publishers—the classic instance of Byron and the Murrays, and in modern days the association of Kipling and Hardy with the Macmillans, of Frank Danby with Hutchinson's, and of W. J. Locke with the Bodley Head.

The writing of books cannot be regarded as only a commercial proposition, although the commercial aspect is naturally of considerable and, nowadays, of increasing importance. The personal relationship between author and publisher is bound to play a part in the transaction. So long as results are mutually satisfactory and personal relations continue to be harmonious, partners are not likely to separate, and it is satisfactory to record the pleasant and profitable association of many notable authors and publishers.

In these increasingly complex times, however, there is considerably more danger of the disappearance of the old personal relationship. Publishing is rapidly becoming more and more commercial. The new complications and ramifications of publishing are undoubtedly responsible for the widening of the gulf between author and

publisher. It may not be possible to bridge it socially and sociably as in the old days, but a clearer understanding of the situation on both sides may well help author and publisher to understand and sympathise with each other's difficulties.

There are, of course, publishers and publishers. There are good publishers and bad ; old-fashioned and ultra-modern ; one man businesses and mass-production establishments. Most of the publishers whose names are familiar to the reading public are sound, honourable people, with reputations to maintain. Their methods may differ, but they are thoroughly reputable. There are publishers of another kind, who do not subscribe to the sound old journalistic tradition that " what is worth printing is worth paying for." Their business methods have nothing in common with the real practice of publishing. Numerically they are negligible, but, as the unwary author may fall into their net, a word of explanation and caution may not be out of place. Briefly, their business is mainly publishing " on commission," as it is termed. That is to say, the author pays for the publication of his book. It would be foolish to pretend that there is any great harm in an " author " gratifying his vanity by paying for the privilege of seeing his work in print between covers. In fact, many well-known authors have had to begin their literary careers by paying part, if not the whole, cost of production of their books. Particularly is this true of certain types of books, for which the demand is so limited that even under the most favourable conditions their publication must result in a loss. In these circumstances it is only reasonable that the author who wishes to be published should bear the burden of the inevitable loss. Many—I should say the majority nowadays—of the volumes of verse published are

financed wholly or in part by their authors. "Juveniles"—books for children—often fail to find a publisher unless the author is prepared to contribute towards the cost of production.

The danger is, however, that the publisher who makes the publication of books on commission his sole business is apt to regard a manuscript, not from the standpoint of its literary merit, but from the prospective profit to himself out of the money which the author may be willing to pay. Needless to say he takes care to make his own profit out of the transaction, and the "estimates" of the cost of printing an edition of the book are naturally framed to include that figure. This criticism does not of course apply to every publisher who publishes books on commission. Many of our most important publishers occasionally issue a book this way, when circumstances justify it; and their figures may be accepted without hesitation.

It is foolish vanity, perhaps, to publish a book at one's own expense, unless it has merit, and only practical considerations have prevented reputable publishers from accepting it; but the firms that trade on human nature in this fashion do not deserve the honourable title of "publisher." It is hardly necessary to make further comment.

There is a good deal to be said in favour of the old-fashioned type of publishing house. They have tradition behind them, and tradition counts in the publishing world. Booksellers are a conservative race, and the publisher of long and honourable standing, who has the reputation of not publishing books lightly, holds a high place in the estimation of "the trade." As a bookseller recently remarked to me, "So-and-so's don't publish many books but, when they do, you may be sure they're worth looking

at. No sausage-machine stuff here, sir ! ” The imprint of the older school of publisher, naturally, is more appropriate to some books than others. Dignity and impudence may mix well in an oil-painting but are sure to come to grief in the publishing business.

It is commonly supposed (generally by their contemptuous go-ahead young rivals) that the old-established publishing firms cannot and do not keep pace with the times and, as a result, cannot sell their books. This is, I think, a mistaken view. It does not follow that tradition and dignity are incompatible with salesmanship. In some respects—notably in advertising—the older houses may not be so enterprising as the younger generation, but the tendency to regard everything with Victorian or even Edwardian origins as a “ back number ” is an error of judgment.

“ It is idle to deny,” as Mr. W. B. Maxwell wrote in the *Author* recently, “ that even in this world of chaos and lost traditions the imprint of certain really good publishers has a prestige, if it does not quite bestow a cachet. The first question a reader asks of an author is, ‘ Who is your publisher ? ’ and if one is able to reply ‘ So-and-so ’ or ‘ Such-and-such,’ it has the same comforting sound as when one says one is a member of a still venerable and select club.”

The new school of publishers is an interesting phenomenon. Their policy is frankly commercial. Modern methods of salesmanship and advertising, and a preference for quantity rather than quality, have taken the field. They are out to sell books—a worthy and laudable ambition, let it be said—and the margin of profit on their turnover is more important to them than the literary quality of their authors’ work. If there is any prospect of developing an author into a commercial success that is

their primary concern. Let us be honest with ourselves and admit that many authors share the same point of view. Not perhaps for the same reasons, since to an author bigger sales mean wider appreciation—a factor which the author, if he be human, is bound to take into consideration. The publisher who advertises extensively makes a strong appeal to a large number of authors, and their names will often be found in his list on this account. An author chooses his publisher (when he is in a position to do so) for various reasons : (1), the terms the publisher is prepared to pay ; (2), his commercial activity, viz., organisation and sales machinery ; (3), advertising as distinct from salesmanship, although it is a contributory factor ; (4), the quality of the publisher's book production (a more important point this than some publishers realise) ; and (5), last, but not least, the publisher's courtesy towards his authors.

The wise publisher is he who realises that the average author is not a business man. Authors are temperamental, sometimes to the point of eccentricity, and many a valuable author has been lost to a publisher who failed to be human, as well as business-like—a difficult but not impossible combination—in his dealings with the said author.

The actual contract is not nearly so important as many authors believe. To my mind it represents, roughly, about 40 per cent in the case of the averagely successful book. (As soon as a book progresses beyond the ordinarily successful stage the terms of the contract naturally become more and more significant.) Infinitely more important than the amount of the advance and the actual figure of the royalty is the ability of the publisher to sell books. Few authors realise this. To put it in a nutshell, it is better policy for an author to take a £50

advance and a ten per cent royalty from the publisher who can sell, say, three thousand copies of his novel, than to accept £100 and a 15 per cent royalty from a publisher whose limited organisation will sell only 1,500 copies.

Many authors prefer certain publishers to others on account of the better quality of their book production. One result of the great increase in the number of books published has been, in certain instances, a deplorable lowering of the standard of production. Some publishers have never recovered from the war period, when inferior paper and inefficient printing and binding were inevitable. Although there are a few English publishers who can manufacture an artistic book, it must be admitted that the American standard of book production is higher than our own. Recently, however, there has been an appreciable improvement in the quality of book production. As a rule, it is only the publisher who produces a limited number of books who can make a really good book. Careful production takes time.

In this survey of publishers we are necessarily putting the commencing author out of court for the time being, and considering the publisher from the angle of the author whose public is more or less established. Such authors are, up to a point, in a position to choose their publishers; but the considerations which influence their decision naturally have some interest for authors still unknown.

At a certain stage in his career the average author finds himself confronted with this problem. Should he remain with his original publisher? The loyalty of authors to their original publishers has already been touched upon. The author who remains with the same publisher benefits in a practical way. The booksellers, who are a very conservative body, always know from whom to order that

author's books, and there is no doubt that the continuance of an author's name under the same publisher's imprint gives a favourable impression to "the trade." The author who goes from one publisher to another is, on the other hand, regarded with disfavour; there is always the underlying suspicion that the publisher has been only too glad to let the author go.

The publisher, too, can afford to advertise that author and his books steadily and thoroughly, for he is improving his own property. He can also afford to bring out cheap editions of the author's earlier books and keep them in print. In short, he can, and does, "push" his permanent authors. It is worth his while. But authors and publishers are, in the nature of things, liable to come to a parting of the ways. Actual quarrels are, happily, of rare occurrence. But, as Mr. W. B. Maxwell says, "Authors leave publishers for many reasons, just as wives leave husbands. They leave because they think they are not being properly treated—that somebody else is being preferred to them—that in such an atmosphere they will never get an adequate chance of full self-expression. Sometimes they change their publishers merely from what may be described as night fears. They believe, quite baselessly, that the publisher has sold three large editions and accounted for only two meagre ones, that he did not 'remainder' that masterpiece, but disposed of it at the ordinary price. They leave because, staring them in the face, there is the obvious fact that a new book to a publisher is a very small affair, while to them it is a very big one, since they are only going to write twenty more books and the publisher is going to publish ten thousand. They leave because their publisher is well satisfied with the modest measure of success

they have obtained, while they are profoundly dissatisfied. They leave because of the sickness of hope deferred. They leave because other publishers are persistently beckoning and luring—not because, as the deserted publisher always thinks, a purse was rattled before their greedy eyes, but because a confident promise of improvement was given. They leave publishers in a large way of business because they are at last persuaded that their books gets no proper show in an overcrowded list; they leave small firms because they have come to the conclusion that only the big capital, wide organisation and up-to-date management of a great concern can do them any good."

Is a big firm preferable to a small publisher? The question raises some interesting issues. The small publisher, it is true, can and often does devote more time and attention to the comparatively few books and authors on his list than his bigger rival can afford. In some respects publishing is still a personal business. The old author-and-publisher relationship, although fast disappearing as a result of new conditions, still survives, and to many authors this sympathetic contact is an important consideration. An author likes to feel that the publisher takes a keen personal interest in his work. He naturally doesn't like his precious books, the children of his brain, to be treated merely as merchandise and the subject only of profit and loss accounts. There is also another important consideration. The author who has earned a reputation often prefers to head the smaller publisher's list rather than to be one of many authors with equally considerable reputations in the list of the bigger publishers. It would not be fair to claim for the small publisher the facilities which his larger scale competitor can often obtain, but for prestige and efficiency he is at

no disadvantage. There is thus a great deal to be said in favour of the small publisher.

On the other hand big firms of publishers offer certain advantages. First, their imprint often carries more weight with the bookseller than the quality of the book may deserve ; for the bookseller is aware that the publisher can afford to advertise the book more generously and thus stimulate if not actually create a demand. This policy of spending money on pushing a book, sometimes out of all proportion to its immediate returns, also reacts to an extent on reviewers, with the result that the author gets additional publicity. In the hands of a big publisher an author knows, if his book is fortunate enough to show signs of developing into a " best seller," that the publisher will readily spend large sums of money on additional advertising appropriations, trade letters and circulars, and that the whole weight of his selling organisation will be thrown into the scale on his book's behalf. His relations with the publisher may be, and usually are, less intimate, but there are many practical advantages.

" Publishing is work of infinite variety," said a writer recently in *Constable's Monthly List*, the clever house organ of the firm of Constable & Co., Ltd. " It is a life of personal contacts, continual adjustment of circumstance to temperament, and, above all, of endless varying detail. No two books are identical, any more than are their authors. It is not enough to contract for six biographies, six books of travel and two dozen novels, and having decided on a style in which each genre shall be produced, to put them on the market with mechanical efficiency. Efficiency in publishing is like efficiency in motherhood. It must have the business qualities of punctuality and knowledge and orderly control ; but it must also have sympathy and a quick sense of the

individuality of each growing child. You will ask, then, whether the ideal publisher exists. Probably not. But an author who can gauge his man will, if he has a sense of what a publisher should do, know how much reasonably to expect. From the publisher, who is also an educated being and of himself congenial, he will get advice that may not only make his book more saleable, but even improve it as a book. Mutual dealings will be pleasant, and the author's stringencies will find a generous friend when most they need it. Yet on occasions the literary publisher may seem unduly diffident in exploitation of the market, or unskilful (whether from lack of capital or enterprise) in large-scale operations. The competent commercialist, on the other hand, will give an author accurate and rapid service in matters technical, but the next moment wound his susceptibilities by vulgar boosting, or in some other point of mutual dealing act with obtuseness, lack of courtesy or sudden jarring parsimony. In default, therefore, of perfection, writers should perhaps decide which failing in a publisher they are most prepared to tolerate—and choose accordingly."

Among authors and publishers the significance of different publishers' imprints is obvious. The mere name of a publisher conveys to anyone with professional associations the whole of his reputation and current activities. But it is important to remember that the imprint rarely conveys any meaning to the public.

It is a difficult as well as a delicate matter to try and convince a publisher that to the average reader all books look alike, that the title and the author's name are practically all that matter. They don't believe it; on the contrary, they rather pathetically invest the individual imprint with a degree of importance which,

facts being facts, unfortunately is at present far from being justified.

Present day advertising, however, undoubtedly reveals the degree of importance which most publishers attach to their own imprints. Everywhere it is So-and-so's books, So-and-so being printed in type so large and prominent that authors' names and titles seem to follow discreetly and modestly as an afterthought; particularly is this true of English publishers; a more keenly developed sense of salesmanship probably restrains his American confrère.

At first sight the tendency seems on all fours with the notion of inflated self-importance which inspires (if so dignified a word may be applied to it) theatrical managements to print their own names in type not less than, say, three times the size of the type allotted to that of the mere author. This, however, is doing considerable injustice to the publisher, who, to give him his due, is generally a more intelligent and cultured citizen than the average. When he emphasises his own imprint he does so for various reasons.

In the first place, his most important customers are the booksellers, and his imprint is of obvious significance to the bookseller. Apart from the practical purpose of informing the trade that he publishes certain books and certain authors, he realises the importance of impressing the bookseller. To this extent imprint advertising is completely justifiable. Experience soon convinces the most retiring of publishers that modesty is unprofitable in "trade" announcements.

When it is a question of general press advertising, however, the same hidebound tendency reveals itself. I use the word "hidebound" advisedly, since the too-lavish use of the imprint is so often merely imitative.

Jones doesn't like to be outdone by Robinson ; and Brown goes one better by using 48-point type instead of the other's 36-point. This may be natural vanity but—under present conditions—it seems to me a waste of valuable space.

I am convinced that, were it possible to take a referendum on the point, at least ninety per cent of what we call the reading public would not only deny that they were influenced to any extent by the publisher's imprint, but that they would be utterly unable to say off-hand who published any of the last half-dozen books they had read.

For this state of affairs the publishers have chiefly the uniformity of book production to thank. One book, to the lay eye, looks very much like another. Apart from special gift books, a book has to be exceptionally well produced to evoke even mild praise from the reader. If it does happen to stir his favourable comment, your average reader pauses a moment to look critically at the binding, imposition or paper, or whatever it may be that pleases his fancy, to think or even to murmur, "Why, this is a nice-looking book." But even then he may not take the trouble to look at the publisher's imprint. On the other hand, if a book is so badly manufactured that the binding comes unstuck in his hands, or the pagination is wrong, or the leaves fall out, only in such extremes will he vent his verbal wrath on the man that made such a shoddy book. And even then he may not take the trouble to look at the publisher's imprint.

Even should he do so, I doubt whether the name registers any permanent impression on his mind. I must repeat that it is hard for those who are actively concerned in book-making to realise that we are, like all experts, in a tiny minority ; we make a mental trinity of title, author and publisher, but to the reader

who walks into a bookseller's shop there is always a missing link in that trinity. There are, of course, a discriminating few in addition to those professionally interested; but when you add together the numbers of those who to any degree are influenced by publishers' imprints, you have but a negligible percentage of readers of books. The fact is that the great reading public is indifferent—thanks, as I have said, to the uniform standard of production and price—to the name of the man who manufactured the book.

Yet the man who manufactured the book is also the man who selected that book for publication. And that brings us to a point very important in consideration of this question of imprints. When a magazine becomes favourably known and increases its circulation no one will deny that its success is due in large measure to its governing editorial policy. The consistent selection of good stories—good in the sense that they are enjoyed by that section of the public for which the magazine is intended—brings highly satisfactory results. Our fortunate magazine acquires a reputation, and benefits accordingly. Why then, since the publisher's imprint corresponds to the magazine title, should not a publishing firm prosper on similar lines? There are many reasons; first, books in themselves provide practically no scope for originality—a variation in the colour and design of the binding, a striking wrapper maybe, or a particularly happy title—and, secondly, the astonishing variations of taste which inevitably exist in the selection of books make it impossible to reduce them to a defined standard, high or low. The trouble is that you can't—with one or two exceptions—locate a book public. The exceptions include, without doubt, two types of fiction which are assured of a certain measure of popularity—detective

and mystery novels. Any publisher featuring this type of novel would, by steadily associating his imprint with good mystery or detective stories, *in time* create a distinct demand for books bearing his name. But he would have to publish these stories exclusively and to preserve a high standard of quality. With novels of general interest, and serious books too, where the author is comparatively unknown, every publisher knows that he is, up to a point, taking a gamble. You can't tell a "good" book beforehand in the same way that you can tell a good magazine story.

But these are minor reasons. The fundamental reason—and one which I think goes to the root of the whole matter—is that the publisher expects the public to run before they can walk. Before the public can discriminate between one publisher's books and another's—and it is difficult enough in these days when publisher's lists, like the dear old curate's egg, answer to the description of being good in parts—it is necessary to educate the public up to buying and reading more books.

It has been found impossible to induce English publishers to combine with the object of creating, by co-operative advertising, an increased demand for books as books. One or two bold pioneers have been trying—in vain—to persuade the publisher that it is to his ultimate advantage to inculcate the book-reading habit. No, the English publisher resigns himself to a pitifully limited public. It is, I readily admit, difficult to sell books by advertising under present conditions: but to nine English publishers out of ten, attractive advertising is rank heresy; and as for a national co-operative advertising campaign in favour of books—sheer waste of money!

The case for the imprint is admirably put by Mr. Arthur Waugh of Messrs. Chapman and Hall, when he says:

Books are not after all chosen at haphazard. They are chosen because they appeal to some facet or other of the temperament of the men responsible for their selection ; and in time, spread over a number of years, it may be seen that the list of a firm's publications does present an expression of the composite personality of the board that manages that firm's interests. In time, consequently, one does come to recognise the imprint of a particular firm as the guarantee of a particular type of quality. There are, of course, a great many books that would be equally suitable to a great many lists ; but the general reader of acute perceptions comes unquestionably in the long run to turn instinctively to the output of a particular publishing house. If a reader can pick up a book by a new writer, or a writer who is unknown to him, and can from the name of the publisher obtain some indication of the type of book that is in his hands, then that publishing house can claim to possess personality. The author's name on a book corresponds to a label on a wine bottle : it is a statement of the contents. So should, in its much wider sense, be a publisher's name at the foot of it. We hear often enough someone say, " Oh, that's by So-and-so ; it's certain to be good." It is the publisher's hope that one day he will hear someone say, " Oh, that's published by So-and-so ; it ought to be all right."

But, wide as is Mr. Waugh's experience in publishing books, I quarrel with him over ' the general reader of acute perceptions.' To my mind, if he is not actually a contradiction in terms, in point of numbers he is so negligible that, to put it mildly, publishers pay him extravagant homage when they so regularly flourish their imprint in their announcements, and, as in the case of Mr. Waugh, are perhaps over-optimistic in their hopes that the firm's imprint will even in time attract the discerning reader.

Amid the vast and ever-increasing deluge of new books there is, for the general reader, only time for relatively few books ; and, in the nature of things, the books of

his choice cover many and various imprints. How then is he to gauge the value of any individual imprint? Indeed, by the time his palate has registered the quality of an imprint, it will probably have become insensitive through sheer old age—and by then the irony of the situation will almost certainly be that someone else has slipped into the publisher's shoes, with a consequent change of policy!

No, the imprint, although it deserves to be important, unfortunately is not. Books are not proprietary articles, and never will be. The imprint has significance for the initiated few (it attracts authors to the publisher as well as being of practical importance to the bookseller), but it is a meaningless symbol to the vast majority. If publishers were to reduce their imprint advertising to 10- or 12-point type at the foot of their advertisements and devote the resulting saving in expenditure to a co-operative campaign to sell more books—as books—they would benefit enormously. Perhaps not this year, nor next; but who is in business for just a year or two?

The imprint is, I am afraid, a fetish which common-sense can hardly hope to kill. Publishers are notoriously conservative. But, as a final plea for its relegation to just proportions, it must be pointed out that the imprint is really only a survival from the early days when the publisher was both publisher and book-seller. In the old days, the imprint told the reader where to go and buy the book. To-day, with the book-seller at his service, the reader neither expects nor requires such illogical and loud-voiced direction.

CHAPTER V

APPROACHING PUBLISHERS

ANY publisher of experience will tell you that the ways of authors are weird and wonderful. So much astonishing ignorance prevails as to the procedure in approaching publishers that much of this chapter must necessarily be of an elementary nature. Authors, even the best of them, are so liable to error in this vital branch of their business that even the simplest advice and cautions are necessary.

Some authors seem utterly unable to recognise that the publisher is, first and foremost, a man of business. As such, his office must be conducted on business lines. Yet there have been many instances of authors who have taken their precious manuscript under their arms and set out to interview the publisher whom they deemed worthy the privilege of publishing it. When, naturally, the author is received by someone in the outer office with the polite request that the MS. be left for consideration, the outraged author has been known to take his MS. and his departure promptly and indignantly. It never seems to dawn on these impossible people that the publisher can't spare time personally to interview every stray caller. Of course, it is just possible that by so delegating the interview to an underling and thus wounding the author's feelings, once in a while he allows a budding genius or "best-seller" to go to a rival publisher. But, I think, not often.

One occasion in my earliest literary days I shall always remember. A certain author, of some little distinction—I think he had then three or four moderately successful novels to his credit—called at the office of one of the leading publishers, and it devolved upon me to see him. At that time I happened to be acting as a sort of junior literary editor, as well as being assistant editor of one of the firm's weekly publications, their publicity manager and various other odd things. The well-known author [*sic*] for this is how he introduced himself (I had read his books but could think of no comment which would have greased the wheels of the interview) looked me up and down disparagingly, and said: "I take it you have no sort of—er—authority?" Impossible to reproduce the intonation. I replied: "Oh, no, I'm merely a glorified office-boy." To my astonishment, he said, perfectly seriously, "I don't waste my time on office boys," and out he went. It was a severe blow to my pride, but I am sure his departure saved the office a great deal of subsequent bother.

According to tradition Byron declared that Barabbas was a publisher. (Mr. John Murray has, I believe, officially given the lie to the statement that Byron altered the Biblical words and sent the mutilated Bible to the original John Murray.) At any rate, a considerable section of authors seem to believe that the publisher is inherently a rogue and is out to defraud the innocent author. Of course there are publishers and publishers; but I doubt whether a more honourable body of business men could be found anywhere. I have always found it difficult to convince a certain type of author that the publisher is genuinely anxious to find good books and publish them, and that that anxiety is so keen that he will willingly assign to the author a generous share of the potential

profits in order to have the privilege of publishing his book. In addition, publishers will take unlimited trouble and often incur considerable expense in trying to find the MSS. they want.

I wonder whether authors realise the relatively important cost of reading MSS. which every reputable publisher incurs? Thousands of MSS. are submitted every year to every publisher of note, and every one of these has to be examined. It is true that the obviously unsuitable ones are weeded out in very quick time and duly returned to their authors; but what of the likely MSS.? Each of these has to have a more or less careful reading; many of them have to be read by two or three different people. In one important publishing house every novel of promise is invariably read by three separate readers and three reports are submitted to the Fiction Editor. All this costs money, in the form of valuable time and otherwise. In the case of MSS. of specialist or technical interest, it is often necessary for the publisher to obtain an expert opinion from an outside authority, for which he may have to pay a fee of two or three guineas.

It would be quite logical for the publisher to charge a nominal reading fee when unsolicited MSS. are submitted to him, but, fortunately, the competition for acceptable books is so keen that publishers cheerfully undertake to sacrifice time, money and labour in their search for good material. It is, as a matter of fact, doubly fortunate for the author that publishers are willing to read their MSS. for nothing, for any attempt to institute even a nominal reading fee would inevitably bring undesirable "publishers" into the field, whose sole concern would undoubtedly be to take as many fees as possible from as many authors as possible.

I do not pretend that the present-day publisher is a

philanthropist who ought to receive the grateful thanks of authors ; he is, as I have said, primarily a business man. He badly wants good MSS. and is prepared to go to a lot of trouble to find them. I do think, however, that many authors lose sight of this aspect of the literary business, and, if they took the trouble to realise it, would be more ready to appreciate the publisher's difficulties.

So often one hears of authors writing resentfully to complain that their MS. has received no attention, it being a month ago since it was delivered, and so on. Delay is bound to occur, even in the best regulated establishments. MSS., like other things, have a way of pouring in thick and fast at certain times ; readers are sometimes ill, or away. Instances where real discourtesy has been shown to authors are so rare that one can only congratulate publishers on their forbearance in dealing with impatient writers.

There is, of course, a good deal of allowance to be made for the natural anxiety of the author, but while the majority of publishers deal with the work of even unknown writers as expeditiously as they can, I cannot help feeling that most young authors do not know the exact position.

To begin at the beginning, then, it is obviously bad policy to waste the publisher's time. A manuscript can quite safely be sent to the publisher by post, preferably registered. It is customary, as well as equitable, to enclose stamps of an equivalent value to enable the publisher to return the manuscript if unacceptable. Reasonably enough, in these days when postage is a serious consideration, many publishers will not undertake to return MSS. unless the cost of dispatch has been defrayed in advance by the author.

Manuscripts should be clearly typed on plain paper, preferably of quarto size, i.e., 11 in. by 8 in. The paper

should be white, not too thin, not too thick. Only one side of the paper should be used. This may seem very elementary advice, but if an annual pile could be made of manuscripts which do not conform to these simple requirements, I am sure it would overshadow St. Paul's. The average publisher's daily post-bag reveals the most extraordinary productions. Manuscripts on blue paper, yellow paper, green, pink, mauve, and all the colours of the rainbow; and of sizes equally assorted. Many are tied up with variously coloured ribbons; some I have known must have been saturated in perfume; a large proportion are illegible or worn out even when typed; and an even greater proportion are handwritten. Can authors' optimism go further?

To the harassed publisher's reader a manuscript is just a manuscript. He doesn't want to be distracted by its unconventional appearance nor does he welcome the curious devices which some authors appear to imagine will ensure preferential or more sympathetic consideration for their efforts. Such tricks only serve to irritate.

The author's name and address should be clearly typed or written on the title page or the outside cover of the MS.—preferably on both. If a *nom de plume* is used, the author's real name should be put in brackets after it.

One author (who ought to know better, as she has published several books) recently addressed the manuscript of her new novel to "The Literary Editor" of a certain publishing firm, and enclosed for his acceptance a signed photograph, not innocent of perfume, of herself. If she could have witnessed the reception of her unsolicited gift by the literary editor in question, who happens to be a lady, she might have repented of her inspiration.

The manuscript, then, should be a plain affair. Above

all, it should be absolutely legible. Nothing is more annoying than a manuscript which is difficult to read. Although handwritten MSS. have been known to pass muster, I strongly recommend all authors to have their work typed. The difference in cost between good and bad typing is relatively so small that it is just as well to make a good job of it. The point is worth mentioning because inferior typewriting can be just as awkward to read as handwriting.

Convenient margins are a necessity. Many authors overlook this point. On the left hand side of the page a fairly wide margin should be allowed for, with an equally liberal margin at the top. Professional typists usually observe these points, but authors who type their own work are apt to overlook details of this kind.

Manuscripts should be double-spaced, that is to say a line of type should be separated from the following line by a line of white space. Single spacing is undesirable ; after a time it is a strain on the reader's eyes. Some writers prefer triple-spaced typing, i.e., two lines left blank between the lines of type, and that is certainly preferable to single-spacing.

Should manuscripts be bound between covers ? This is a question frequently asked. Some form of binding is, I think, desirable. It prevents the pages from becoming scattered and lost, and, if done carefully, does assist the reader. If, however, the manuscript is so bulky that its weight is not negligible it should certainly not be bound up, as the unfortunate reader may have to bear its weight when reading it, or carry it about. In such cases the manuscript may conveniently be bound in two parts. The binding should not, however, be permanent. When (as is presumably the author's hope) his work is put into the printer's hands, it is customary for the "copy" to

be divided up among several compositors who set up different parts of the book in type simultaneously.

The most practicable and convenient form of binding is the fairly stout but not too heavy "instantaneous" cover which holds all the loose pages firmly until the outside covers are flattened open so far that the contents are released. It is thus possible to add or remove pages as may be required, and enables the reader to separate the MS. if desired. When it eventually finds its way to the printer the cover is easily removed, and in his view the MS. is ideal "copy," ready to his hand.

Pages should be clearly folioed, or numbered, throughout. Chapters should not be self-contained in this respect. If, in revision, certain pages have had to be omitted, it is not necessary to refolio the remainder. If, for instance, pages 102 to 107 have been deleted it is quite enough to number page 101 like this, "101—107." This is a clear indication to both publisher and printer. Similarly, if pages have been added, the recognised device is to number the additional pages 57a, 57b, 57c, and so on, according to the number of the page they follow.

In addition to the practical assistance thus given to the reader, and more especially the printer, these minor points are well worth attention, since their careful observance plainly shows any publisher at a glance that you know the ropes and that you are anxious to avoid making things difficult for him. Some authors profess to be superior to such little points of detail, and it is true that they are, after all, only a minor matter, but if they knew as well as I do how much experienced readers appreciate the author's co-operation in simplifying their task, they would pay them much more attention.

The procedure in reading manuscripts varies considerably among publishing houses. Consequently one

publisher will be able to give a speedier decision than another. Some firms are noted for the rapidity of their decisions ; others are equally notorious for their delay. No useful object would be served by giving their names. If the author has an agent he will almost certainly be able to estimate, from actual experience, how long any given publisher is likely to take in coming to a decision about a book. The point is, however, comparatively unimportant. The first lesson the commencing author has to learn is that of patience. There is, nevertheless, a limit, and the author whose manuscript (provided it is not of special or technical interest) has been under consideration by a firm of publishers for longer than, say, six weeks, is certainly justified in sending them a polite reminder. If that becomes necessary he should make a careful point of notifying them of the title and nature of the MS., and the date it was submitted. If it was sent from a different address or under a *nom de plume* those details should be briefly given. It is useless writing to a publisher and omitting to give him your *nom de plume*, because his office may be so regulated that MSS. are registered under "Author's names," in which case your manuscript is probably not card-indexed under your own name.

When writing to publishers, above all be brief and to the point. A letter of some kind should accompany the MS., but only to state formally—and *briefly*—that you herewith submit your MS. (give title, nature of the book, e.g., whether a novel or a travel book) and that you await his decision, and are his faithfully. The publisher doesn't want the history of the book, nor a recital of the motives that prompted you to write it. It is of no advantage to state proudly that it is your "first attempt at literary work of any kind" (I quote from a typical letter).

Of course, if circumstances are exceptional, it may be

necessary to give the publisher some details. But there is nothing exceptional in writing a book—ask any publisher!—and unless explanations are absolutely essential, it is generally unwise to make your preliminary letter more than a merely formal one.

I have often been asked whether it is advisable to approach a publisher before actually sending him a manuscript, to ascertain whether he is likely to be interested in a work of that kind. Here again, if the book is of an exceptional nature, or if its importance justifies the author doing so, it is a sound plan. But to write to a publisher who issues many novels a week, and say, “I have just completed a novel of about 80,000 words which I should like to submit for your consideration. Will you kindly let me know whether you would like me to send it to you?” is simply foolish.

It is not a good plan to write and ask publishers why they have rejected your MS., and it is equally unreasonable to ask for any criticism of your work. Not that publishers invariably send MSS. back to their authors with a politely formal note of rejection; many publishers take the trouble to send a courteous, sometimes an encouraging, letter to an author when they feel that it is justified by the promising quality of the manuscript.

If a publisher invites you to go and see him and, let us say, suggests some alterations in your book, don’t—if you decide to carry them out—live on his doorstep for weeks afterwards. Publishers are busy people and don’t want to be bothered unnecessarily.

Common sense is about the least common thing in the world, and authors seem to have even less than other people. Whether it is due to egotism, absorption in their own work, or to unbusiness-like habits, or whether it is

considered so foreign to the "artistic temperament" which so many writers consider a desirable part of their mental equipment, I do not know, but a brief experience of authors and their ways compels me to offer the foregoing elementary cautions.

CHAPTER VI

THE LITERARY AGENT

THE literary agent is the most significant indication of the new relations between author and publisher. Publishing a book is a complicated business compared with the procedure of fifty years ago. Nowadays a book is a business in itself. Only a specialist can hope to understand all the ramifications of the business. With the complication of contracts, due to the growth in importance of outside rights in literary property, and the keen competition among publishers, only an expert can manipulate the one and take advantage of the other.

In bygone days the cordial relationship which existed between author and publisher was founded on the simplicity of their business dealings. Experience has clearly shown that when bargaining has to be done those friendly relations are jeopardised. The best of friends are liable to come to grief over business.

The agent has sometimes been described as the fifth wheel on the literary coach. He has been accused of destroying the harmonious relationship between author and publisher, but in some respects the exact opposite is nearer the truth. The author without an agent is at a disadvantage in fixing terms with his publisher, unless he is satisfied to leave everything to the publisher's discretion, and that is obviously a dangerous practice. The

author whose business interests are represented by an agent is enabled, on the other hand, to maintain his friendship with the publisher, to the satisfaction of all parties, including even the agent himself. Indeed, I know authors who leave things entirely to their agents, congratulate them warmly when an improvement in terms is secured, then call on their publishers and mildly deprecate the rapacity of their agents, knowing they can afford to be magnanimous—after the contract is signed.

It is, on the whole, a very satisfactory working arrangement. The author certainly benefits; the agent's services are adequately rewarded; and the publisher appreciates the advantage of dealing with a man who understands the business and can come straight to the point. Moreover, the modern publisher realises that, although he may thereby have to pay the author more, the agent is, or can be, as valuable to him as to the author. Only the short-sighted publisher resents the development of literary agency. It may seem putting the cart before the horse to consider first the value of the agent to the publisher, rather than to the author, but a brief examination of the present position will best explain the enhanced prestige and importance of the literary agent.

In the first place, the publisher who tried to deal with all his authors personally, in the old-fashioned way, would have to restrict his business considerably. The agentless author would scarcely know where he stood with all the different rights in his book and would naturally and frequently come to his publisher to find out. The agent is on the author's side of the fence, and can and does explain all the various complications satisfactorily. In the old days the author went to see his publisher if any question arose in connection with his books; to-day he goes to see his agent.

Secondly, the agent saves the publisher a great deal of time and labour by sifting the wheat from the chaff among manuscripts beforehand. The eternal bane of publishers' lives is the vast quantity of impossible manuscripts which are submitted to them daily. To some extent the agent alleviates this burden. When a MS. arrives in his office, bearing the imprint of a well-known agent, the publisher knows that it has already passed the agent's often severe test of eligibility. But the agent's name on a manuscript is not necessarily any guarantee that it will appeal to every publisher. Tastes differ so profoundly that it is not surprising for an agent to enthuse over a manuscript which makes little or no appeal to publishers. It is important to remember that there are very few agents who really count, and it is only their labels which make a favourable impression.

Indeed, the imprint of a second-rate agent is of no value to the author whatever, since the publisher probably knows from experience that that particular agent's judgment is not to be trusted. Most of the authors whose names are known to the public are represented by the few first-class literary agents whose names do carry some weight.

It is a well-known fact that nearly every author of note is to-day represented by an agent. The value of the agent's services to the author is so obvious that at this stage it may surely be taken on trust. Now the publisher's profits depend directly on authors; and if he wants new authors in his list—and what publisher does not?—he is not so foolish as to alienate the influential agent. The wise publisher establishes friendly relations with those agents—I repeat that they are not many in number—who can sell him the books he wants.

The status of the literary agent has improved enormously as a result of modern developments in the book

world, and the valuable work—valuable to publishers as well as to authors—in the past of the pioneers of reputable literary agency, notably Mr. Curtis Brown, the late Mr. A. P. Watt, and the late Mr. J. B. Pinker. To-day, the influential agent is an important figure in the literary world.

There are, of course, bad agents as well as good ; in fact the number of useless and actually harmful agents is, as one might expect, considerably greater than the number of worth-while agents. There are only about half-a-dozen agents with a reputation. The remainder eke out a living by exploiting the ignorant author in a variety of ways. The reputable agents, who do not advertise, are known to all authors of experience, to all publishers, and to nearly all editors, and the author who is in any doubt as to the prestige of an agent should make enquiries from someone of this kind. The Literary Year Book supplies a list of the leading agents' names and addresses, and its able editor, Mr. Mark Meredith, would, I am sure, give any enquiring author the assurance he needed on a point of this kind.

The agent usually works on a commission basis, generally ten per cent of all monies received by him on behalf of the author. This is the only fee charged by the reputable agent, and covers the negotiation of the MS., the settlement of terms, the preparation of the contract and the collection of monies due to the author.

Those agents who charge "reading fees" are to be avoided, since, whatever they may say to the contrary, all are fish that come to their net ; whereas the honourable agent cannot afford to handle MSS. for which he does not honestly see a prospective market. The agent who works on a payment by results basis is obviously unlikely to negotiate a manuscript unless he believes he can place it,

for, if he does not succeed in selling the MS., he positively loses money, in the form of time, labour, postage expenses and so forth, by handling it, since he receives nothing from the author.

Unfortunately, writers are so lamentably ignorant of the ways of the literary world that a large number of unscrupulous agents are able to make money out of them. By carefully-worded advertisements they induce the unwary young author to submit his MSS. They charge a "nominal" reading fee; they diplomatically suggest that his MSS. should be re-typed (by themselves); they offer to criticise or revise the MSS. In plain English, their first consideration is not to make money for, but out of the author. I do not suggest that because an agent charges reading fees he is necessarily dishonourable, in fact to charge a reading fee is logical enough; nor do I deny that the assistance of an expert in revising or criticising MSS. is a valuable service and as such is entitled to be paid for. But, human nature being what it is, there is no doubt that many unscrupulous individuals continue to exploit the inexperienced writer.

The reputable agent is often as hard to satisfy as the publisher himself. Since the prosperity of his business depends on results, he is naturally not prepared to handle more than that proportion of the manuscripts submitted to him which appears likely to yield results. Consequently it does not follow that the agent will undertake to handle any MS. It has to be read before judgment can be pronounced on it, and if the agent can see no market for it, it must perforce be returned to the author. In one important literary agency known to the writer the average of rejected MSS. is over 85 per cent, that is to say, less than fifteen manuscripts out of every hundred submitted are retained for negotiation.

The value of the agent to the author has been triumphantly demonstrated by experience, but its exact nature is not always clearly understood. Let us consider the main advantages to the author of employing an agent.

First, there are so many potential new markets that the author can only hope to reach them by enlisting the services of an expert. It needs a specialist to cover all the ground. Few writers even know what these markets are and what is their relative importance, but it is the literary agent's business. He is in daily touch with the ever-changing markets for the author's work. Even in the comparatively straightforward task of disposing of certain rights only, e.g., the volume rights in the English language for the British Empire, the agent knows what publishers are likely to be interested. He is, as a rule, in close personal touch with publishers and knows what kind of books they want, as well as what they do not want, and when they want them, and what terms they are likely to pay. Many publishers make a point of informing the leading agents from time to time of their particular requirements. The situation is constantly changing. The book a publisher may not want in January he will eagerly buy in September. If an author were to try to keep in close touch with his markets and thus dispense with the agent he would find he had no time left to write any books at all. There are, it is true, a number of authors who are in frequent and personal contact with publishers and editors, and to them the agent may seem less useful than to the ordinary author. But it is not so.

The author who lunches and dines with publishers and editors is apt to think he is saving a ten per cent agent's commission by doing his business direct, and, as he thinks, probably with as much if not more benefit to himself. But what a short-sighted policy this is!

What of all the other markets for his work, the full benefit of which—as they subsequently find to their sorrow—authors are thereby so often deprived of? Film rights, translation rights, different territorial rights throughout the world, broadcasting rights—all these potentially valuable properties may be lost or depreciated as a result of a contract between author and publisher direct. Not that the publisher is the wicked spider who entices the unwary author into his web; publishers themselves do not always understand the ramifications of the commercial side of literature to-day. This is proved by the large number of publishers who engage an international literary agent to represent *their* interests in the various rights they may have acquired outside their province.

The average writer is naturally disinclined to attend to the business side of his work. The agent, in addition to relieving him of the burden of business details, often contributes to his success as an author by protecting him from the harassing experience of continual rejections. The author's temperament is an important factor, and many an author who has eventually made good could not have worked so cheerfully and optimistically in the earlier stages of his career had it not been for careful nursing at the hands of his agent. The wise agent is more than a business representative; he is, or should be, as it were, a literary godfather. Although literary agency is still a comparatively young institution there are already on record many instances of loyal and long-standing friendships between author and agent, and this relationship is in a sense more valuable to the author than that with his publisher. There can never be any conflict of interest between author and agent as there is often between author and publisher. The agent's interest is identical with his author's.

The ideal literary relationship is the trinity of author, publisher and agent, when all three parties like and trust each other implicitly. At first sight it may appear that the author with an agent need not have any dealings with his publisher, but there are many points on which it is better for author and publisher to consult independently of the agent. The experienced agent realises this. No author should be entirely a stranger to his publisher. The dictum "Discuss business matters with your agent, literary matters with your publisher" is worth remembering in this connection, although it is misleading. Why should literary matters not be discussed with the agent? True, in business matters the author doesn't as a rule speak the language, and the agent has to act on his behalf. But in literary matters the experienced agent should certainly be taken into the confidence of both author and publisher. And he usually is.

Although it is true that the established agent is on friendly terms with the majority of publishers, it is a mistake to imagine that the fact that a manuscript is submitted by an agent influences in any way the publisher's decision. So keen are publishers to discover new talent that they give as much attention to the promising manuscript submitted direct by an unknown author as to one sent in under the imprint of a leading agent. While it is more probable that the agent knows better which publisher may be expected to be interested in the book, the unknown author is at no disadvantage when the MS. comes up for decision. It is equally a mistake to believe, as some writers apparently do, that an agent can succeed where they themselves have failed. An agent is not a miraculous person who can persuade a publisher to accept a manuscript just because he, and not the author, submits it. In this respect, the value of the agent is often

greatly exaggerated, as the agent himself would be the first to admit.

It is when a publisher signifies his willingness to publish a book that the agent most emphatically justifies his existence. If a book is up to publication standard, finding a publisher for it is not so difficult as outsiders imagine; but when terms have to be discussed and a contract drafted the agent reaches his high-water mark of utility to the author. The next chapter deals more fully with the various problems that arise at this stage, and in the handling of which the agent should demonstrate the importance of his rôle.

After the contract has been signed, various points are liable to arise in connection with the format and general production of the book. These the author can generally settle most satisfactorily by dealing direct with the publisher. There is no advantage to be gained, unless, for instance, the author lives abroad, by using the agent merely as a mouthpiece. When the book is actually published, however, the agent once more becomes active. In the collection of monies due and the scrutiny of publishers' accounts the agent's services are most valuable. Here again his expert knowledge is of the utmost value to the author.

Does every author need an agent? This is a difficult question to answer, since every author is a law unto himself. Generally speaking the agent is most useful to the established author, since there is more scope for bargaining than in the case of the new writer, and more international rights to be disposed of. As a rule the beginner would do better, I think, to approach at any rate *editors* direct. Most writers embark on short stories or articles to begin with, and with work of *this kind* it is not of much advantage to employ an agent, at any rate in the early

stages of the writer's career. Later on, when he begins to find his work in print with increasing frequency, the author can profitably approach an agent. In fact the agent can rarely be of service in dealing with articles and short stories by new writers. He knows the market more intimately, it is true, but no young writer can hope for success unless he is himself more or less definitely aware beforehand of the likely markets for his work. Experience soon teaches that it is useless from a practical point of view to write an article or even a short story unless one already has some knowledge of the requirements of editors. It is like shooting without looking at the target.

The agent himself, reasonably enough, is as a rule only enthusiastic about the early efforts of beginners when they are of outstanding merit. Even then it is sometimes a profitable policy to advise the young author to learn to walk on his own legs and only to enlist the agent's support when he has made some progress. He will then be able to appreciate the agent's services. Most well-known authors will testify that their first appearances in print were the result of their approaching editors direct; and that the employment of an agent was a subsequent and inevitable step in their literary careers.

The foregoing remarks apply only to early articles and short stories, which are very seldom the subject of a contract. A book, on the other hand, is generally better handled by an agent than by the author direct, partly because there is more scope for negotiation and also because the contract should have expert supervision.

So much misconception prevails among even experienced authors as to the functions and real value of the literary agent that it is essential to emphasise his limitations. If an author has submitted a manuscript in vain to the majority of publishers it is unreasonable and

impracticable to expect the agent to succeed where the author has failed. Not even the most persuasive agent can work the oracle under these conditions. This does not imply that an agent is debarred from handling a manuscript if it has already been seen and rejected by a few publishers ; it is a question to be decided by how much of the ground has already been covered by the author and by the circumstances of the case.

At the same time it is a mistake to assume that the agent cannot create a market. From the agent's point of view there are two kinds of financially unimportant authors : (*a*) those who haven't it in them to do anything that can be made good to sell ; and (*b*) those who have, but whose quality has not been discovered by editors and publishers.

Any sensible agent will avoid Class A. On the other hand, if he has any intelligence and aptitude for his job, he will work indefatigably for Class B, even without profit at first, in the expectation that his perspicacity and confidence will be well rewarded when Class B's market has been created. And the market has to be created.

The author's immediate market is not the public, but the publisher and editor. When an agent whose judgment is trusted goes to editor or publisher and says, " This is a really fine thing by an unknown author," that editor or publisher will set everything else aside and read the offering with hope—even excitedly—providing he knows from long experience that the agent doesn't make many mistakes about these discoveries. That is how a market can be, and in many thousands of instances has been, created.

But the creation of a market is not, after all, one of the most important weapons in the agent's armoury. Circumstances are naturally against him in this respect.

Although more and more new authors are appearing on the horizon for whom such service may be rendered, it is the rising and the established author who benefits most from the employment of an agent. The more important an author is, the more complicated does the business side of his work become. An author "with a name" is a valuable property, and it requires a specialist to deal successfully with the numerous and intricate branches of its management.

Let me quote two instances from actual practice. The first is a certain novel of international interest. These are the sales which were negotiated by the author's agents : (1), American serial rights ; (2), English serial rights ; (3), Australian serial rights ; (4), American and Canadian book rights ; (5), English and Australian book rights ; (6), Swedish book rights ; (7), Danish and Norwegian rights, book and serial ; (8), Continental rights in the English language ; (9), French book and serial rights ; (10), Italian book rights ; (11), Spanish book rights ; (12), Russian rights (although there is no copyright in Russia, and the sale amounted to £5) ; (13), Dutch rights ; (14-19), dramatic rights in six of the countries named ; (20), world film rights ; (21-23), second serial rights in three countries ; (24), Polish rights (a surprise to the agent himself) ; (25), cheap rights in Great Britain ; (26), separate cheap rights in America. And that has not yet exhausted all the commercial possibilities in this novel.

The other example is a non-fiction book recently published. Its history is rather curious. The author, who is a journalist, told me that he approached several publishers with a suggestion for a book on original lines. None of them seemed to be more than mildly interested. One publisher, in fact, was frank enough to tell him that, as nothing on the same lines had been published before,

the proposition was too speculative. He agreed that there might be something in the idea, but declined to back his judgment. The author wisely decided to consult a literary agent, who urged him to write the book he had in mind before approaching a publisher. The agent knew from experience that publishers feel much more optimistic when the concrete manuscript is in their hands. The book duly materialised, and although eight publishers turned it down, the ninth saw its possibilities, and made an offer for the British Empire book rights. This was accepted.

The ice once broken, the rest was easy. Part of the book was sold for serialisation in this country, and an American syndicate, approached by the agent, agreed to cover the American newspaper market—which resulted in the syndication of about two-thirds of the material. The book was published in this country and proved an instant success. Three thousand copies—at 7s. 6d.—were sold in less than three weeks and within three months it had reached its tenth thousand. The book was an even bigger success in America.

In addition to these serial and book sales in America and the British Empire, foreign rights have already been sold to two countries and the field has not yet been covered. The sole calendar rights and the cigarette picture rights were next disposed of. It is true that applications were received by the author in respect of both of these—calendar and cigarette card rights are rarely to be found in the most enterprising agent's bag—but, naturally enough, the author hadn't the remotest idea of the value of such rights, and of course placed the matter in the hands of his agent, who was well able to safeguard his client's interests and ensure his reasonable remuneration.

There is still, of course, a certain body of opinion

among publishers hostile to the literary agent. In a sense this is natural enough ; but the publisher who resents the intrusion of the agent on the ground that the author, as a result, earns more and the publisher less, is a poor sort of publisher. What has really happened is that agents have sprung into being mainly as a result of the development of foreign and other new rights, and of conditions which called for the protection of authors' interests generally. Without agents who fully understand the commercial side authors would be in a sorry plight. Although, of course, there have been some instances of rapacity on the part of agents, I think the sensible agent realises that, while it is his primary duty to get the best of terms and prices in the market, he must not kill the goose from which the golden royalties are expected. It is also part of his job to adjust and preserve that nice balance of interests between author and publisher which is so necessary to the successful outcome of their partnership. The agent should know better than to risk spoiling the market.

Another objection to agents, and one for which there are many sound reasons, is the not uncommon practice of playing off one publisher against another in negotiating an author's work. Such auction methods are indefensible. It is doubtful, however, whether any agent who values his reputation would adopt such methods. Price isn't everything. An increased advance or a royalty does not in itself justify an agent taking an author from one publisher to another.

Not unreasonably, publishers are inclined to suspect agents of persuading their authors to leave them in favour of another publisher who is willing to put up a more tempting offer. Let us consider the position. The agent might reason it out that he would benefit by such a transfer.

True, he would thereby earn an increased commission. But such methods are obviously going to alienate the majority of publishers in the long run, and what agent can hope to carry on his business successfully if his customers are suspicious of his methods? No, the agent must value the goodwill of the publishers, and this can only be retained by straightforward tactics. Backstairs intrigue may result in transient profits, but it is bad policy for the agent in the long run, and I think that the leading agents, at any rate, are fully alive to the importance of maintaining, as far as possible, the cordial relations which should and so often do exist between the author and his publisher. And, most important of all, the agent must act in the best eventual interests of his authors, and we have already noted the advantages (see Chapter IV) of remaining with the same publisher.

Nowadays the influential agent is in a peculiarly favourable position. Publishers and editors, being anxious to secure the authors and contributions they want, are constantly reminding the agent of their requirements. The agent is usually in the position of having more openings for sales than he has material to supply. For the right kind of work there is in fact considerably more demand than supply. It cannot too often be emphasised that there is, relatively, a scarcity of saleable work. So large a proportion of the work of writers generally is merely wasted effort, and consequently unmarketable, that the average author frequently loses sight of the fact that there is a genuine scarcity of acceptable work.

Consequently, when an author begins to climb the literary ladder, he rapidly develops into a literary property which becomes more and more valuable out of all proportion to his progress. When an author begins to "boom" there is no telling how far he may go.

It is at this stage that the agent's services are most valuable to the author. Provided that all the threads are in his hands—an important point this—an author and his work may, with judicious handling, be converted into an exceedingly valuable literary property. It is important that the whole of the author's business should be controlled or managed by one hand, since only in this way can the various and complicated threads be successfully manipulated. For instance, the organisation of a responsible literary agency enables sales to be made simultaneously in different parts of the world; enables the agent to determine whether it is wise to accept, say, a British offer for film rights or to wait for a bigger and, from the author's point of view, a better contract with an American film company. For it is not only the financial aspect that has to be considered. A publisher recently said :

The literary agent works on the theory that the publisher who pays the most is the best publisher, and that no other quality beyond a readiness to pay has real significance.

This is very unfair to the agent who honestly has the best interests of his authors at heart. Money isn't everything, even in a literary agent's office. There are many other considerations—the author's reputation, for instance. The agent who advised an author to accept the highest bid for his work regardless of other considerations would be, even from a commercial point of view, distinctly foolish.

An author can only be commercially exploited with success by the co-ordination of all his interests; and it must be admitted that this can only be accomplished by the big literary agent.

There are many literary agents who do not come into this category. The "one-man" agent obviously is at a

to the advisability of themselves offering any particular work for sale.

3. The Agents shall collect and receive from purchasers all moneys due to the Author under contracts or sales negotiated by them and shall account to the Author without undue delay for all such moneys making deduction therefrom for commission as follows :

On British or American sales—ten per cent (10%)

On Foreign sales—ten per cent (10%) plus foreign agency fees not exceeding a further ten per cent (10%).

Such commission notwithstanding the termination of this Agreement shall continue to accrue in respect or in consequence of work done by the Agents. Where moneys due under arrangements made by the Agents are paid direct to the Author the Author undertakes to pay to the Agents commission on the scale herein defined.

4. The Author will refer to the Agents all enquiries he may receive from publishers or other persons concerning any rights in his literary work.
5. Except for stamps on agreements, cost of foreign cables or postages, typing, and similar petty disbursements the Agents will not involve the Author in any pecuniary responsibility without his sanction.
6. The Agents will use their best endeavours to further the interests of the Author but they cannot guarantee that sales will be effected ; and while they will endeavour to sell only to such firms as they believe to be reliable they cannot accept responsibility for loss to the Author caused through bankruptcy or other default of a Purchaser.
7. Every reasonable care will be taken of manuscripts, etc., by the Agents, but they cannot be held responsible for accidental loss of or damage to the same.

The best type of agent, however, prefers to bind his authors solely by goodwill. It is the agent's business to satisfy his authors, and provided that they continue to be satisfied he relies upon their continued loyalty to him with the dawning of more prosperous days. In practice

this policy is on the whole successful. Authors as a race are loyal creatures and only an unworthy minority will desert the agent who serves them faithfully and well in their struggling days in favour of another, unless they have good reason for dissatisfaction.

To-day there can be no doubt of the desirability of the useful agent as a literary institution. The old-time prejudice is fast disappearing. There are of course still some people who sincerely oppose a development which tends still further to commercialise literature. But it is inevitable. The agent who knows his job is an asset to the publishers and of inestimable, if varying, value to authors. Generally speaking, it cannot be denied that the rise of the literary agent has given a big impetus to the monetary return to authors for their work.

It is not too much to say that the responsible agent has it in his power to further the cause of literature. By putting authorship on a more attractive financial basis, new authors are encouraged to put pen to paper, and while this may well be regarded as a doubtful blessing, who knows whether work of permanent artistic value may not thereby be added to the scroll of literature?

One cannot condemn too emphatically the worthless agent, whose sole consideration is his own immediate profit. To justify his existence the agent must have a sound knowledge of, and a wide acquaintance with, books and authors, new and old, and a keen appreciation of what is and is not worth while. I do not mean to deprecate the publication of work which has merely a commercial value; there are sound reasons for defending the production of books intended merely to entertain. The public has to be educated up to reading good books by a gradual process, and it is a truism that many a reader has begun by being absorbed in "blood-and-

thunder " stories and finished up by appreciating the work of the acknowledged masters of literature.

The agent has, in fact, a serious responsibility, and with the growth of his power, an increasing responsibility. Authors, publishers and agents themselves should recognise this truth. It is especially important that agents themselves should not abuse their increasingly influential position. Every one with the cause of literature at heart should strive to eliminate the pest of the undesirable agent; at the same time recognising the indubitable value of the good agent. For when the agent *is* good, he is very, very good ; but when he is bad, he is indeed horrid.

CHAPTER VII

CONTRACTS

THE day when a publisher writes to say that he is interested in an author's book and is prepared to publish it is one to which every writer looks forward, especially if the experience is a novelty. On such an auspicious occasion the elated author is apt to regard the financial aspect as of minor importance beside the fact that a publisher likes his book and wants to publish it.

A form of contract—printed or typed—may accompany the letter, and the author should give this document careful consideration. Every reputable publisher would want him to do so, but there are one or two publishers who do not hesitate to take advantage of a writer's inexperience, and they are fully aware of the psychological effect of a printed contract accompanying their acceptance of the book. The inexperienced author cheerfully and promptly puts his signature on a document which, he assumes, must be the regular form of agreement ; he may, in his innocence, even think the terms generous. But he would be well advised to show any contract thus submitted to an expert before signing it. The young author who signs in haste often repents at leisure.

A formal contract between publisher and author was not always considered necessary. Publishing in former

times was not the highly specialised business it is to-day. In the old days an exchange of letters between author and publisher was sometimes all the agreement that was made. Even to-day we hear occasionally of agreements made in this way, but they call for an expression of child-like faith on the part of one or other of the parties. Where author and publisher have implicit faith in each other it is possible for such an amicable arrangement to work with complete satisfaction, but unexpected snags have a knack of becoming evident when everything appears satisfactory, and friendships may easily be wrecked for lack of a definite understanding on some issue which arises subsequently.

This is where a contract comes in, and where its value is shown. The justification for contracts is so strong that a very few moments' reflection will convince anyone of the necessity. Briefly, the principal function of a contract is to put the rights and liabilities of the various parties so clearly that each will know exactly where he stands. And if this is necessary between the author and the publisher in those cases where they come into actual contact and make all the arrangements between them, how much more so does it become when another individual is brought into the matter, as is quite likely to occur? Much misunderstanding may often be prevented by putting aside sentiment for a few minutes and coming down to hard facts. It is only fair to publisher, as well as to author, for the position to be stated clearly at the outset. The absence of any formal agreement may apparently not make an atom of difference between them, and the connection between an author and his publisher may continue for years without any untoward results, but sooner or later some difficulty is almost sure to arise, and in that event parties are likely to find that they have little legal

price of every copy sold of the English edition up to Two thousand (2000) copies ; twelve and one half per cent ($12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent) on the next fifteen hundred (1500) copies ; fifteen per cent (15 per cent) on the next fifteen hundred (1500) copies ; and twenty per cent (20 per cent) on copies sold beyond five thousand (5000).

- (b) A royalty of ten per cent (10 per cent) of the published price of cheaper editions published at less than 5/- (five shillings).
 - (c) A royalty of ten per cent (10 per cent) of the price realised on all copies sold to the Colonial market.
 - (d) The Publishers shall pay to the Author on the day of publication of the said work the sum of Thirty Pounds (£30) being in advance and on account of the foregoing royalties.
4. All details as to the manner of production, publication and advertisement and the number and destination of free copies shall be left to the sole discretion of the Publishers who shall bear all expenses in connection therewith except the amount (if any) of Author's corrections other than printers' errors in the proofs in excess of fifteen per cent (15 per cent) of the cost of composition which extra amount shall be borne by the Author and settled in account.
 5. The Author shall receive on publication six presentation copies of the work and shall be entitled to purchase further copies for personal use at the lowest trade price.
 6. If the Publishers give notice at any time that in their opinion the demand for the said work has ceased or if the said work be allowed to go out of print and they neglect to issue a new edition within six months of having received written notice thereof or if by reason of bankruptcy payment due to the Author shall not be made as specified herein then in any of these cases all rights conveyed under this agreement shall revert to the Author without further notice.
 7. If the Publishers do not publish a cheaper edition within four years of original publication and fail to do so after that period within six months of having received written notice from the Author to publish such cheaper edition the Author shall be free to arrange himself for the publication of such cheaper edition.

8. In the event of the Publishers disposing of copies at a reduced rate when the sale of the said work has in their opinion ceased they shall pay to the Author ten per cent of the price obtained if the price obtained be more than the cost price but they shall make no payment to the Author if they should dispose of copies as a remainder at or below cost.

First we have the formal preamble which designates the parties to the agreement and the subject thereof, and requires no explanation.

Clause 1.—This specifies which rights are being conveyed to the publisher, and the extent of the territory in which he is free to sell the work.

The territory is an important point : some contracts restrict the publisher to the volume rights throughout the British Empire, which means that he has the right to sell copies anywhere within the Empire. Others exclude Canada (for reasons which will be explained later). Again others cover the British Empire and the U.S.A. While yet another form is that of the English language rights throughout the world. This is to be guarded against, for it includes not only the markets already indicated, but also editions published in English anywhere else, such as the Tauchnitz, and these Continental editions sometimes prove to be valuable properties. But one should always beware of "volume rights" without any further qualification, for then the author would find that he had probably allowed not only the English language rights, but also rights of translation, to pass out of his control, and on probably unsatisfactory terms.

Clause 2.—The libel clause. Some such clause as this is always insisted upon by a publisher as a precautionary measure, and is really necessary. The question of possible libel or infringement of copyright is one that is ever

present, although one may go for years without actually encountering an instance. It is an eventuality which must be guarded against. The form of libel clause varies according to various circumstances, and often a more explicit clause is used. We shall see examples of this later.

Clause 3.—Here we have the dates up to which accounts are reckoned, and the period allowed in which payment is to be made, also the royalties which the publisher agrees to pay to the author. The figures quoted are perhaps as good as can be expected for a first novel, and the amount payable is reckoned on the published price of the book. For example, a 10% royalty on a 7s. 6d. book produces 9d. for the author, 12½ per cent—11¼d., 15 per cent—1s. 1½d., and so on.

The royalty on cheaper English editions seldom exceeds 10 per cent on the published price of such cheaper editions, because the costs of production do not decrease in the same proportion as the decrease in price; therefore the margin of profit on a 3s. 6d. book is a smaller percentage of the whole than in the case of a 7s. 6d. book.

Colonial sales: Here again we have a smaller percentage by way of royalty, because the price obtainable is so much smaller. The publisher sells copies to colonial buyers at something like one-third of the published price, to allow for carriage and other incidental expenses, and the royalty to the author is calculated on the amount received.

Advance royalties: It is the recognised practice of the majority of publishers to pay the author on the day of publication a sum in anticipation of the royalties his book will earn. The amount which they are prepared to pay varies according to the book in question and their own custom.

Advance payments range between £20 and £100 for a first novel; £40 is a good average figure. For a very important book of general interest some thousands of pounds may be considered a fair figure on account of future royalties.

Not every publisher is prepared to pay an advance. The majority, however, will pay what is known as an accrued advance: this is a sum equivalent to the amount earned in royalties by the number of copies sold to the trade up to and including the day of publication. A few publishers are reluctant to make any payment in advance, and pay only half-yearly whatever has become due in royalties (see Clause 3).

In justice to the publisher it must be pointed out that he has to give long credit to many of the booksellers; in fact, most publishers do not reckon to see their money until six months after delivery of books to the bookseller.

Advance payments are nearly always made on the day of publication. Occasionally a payment is made to the author on delivery of the manuscript, say half the advance agreed upon, the balance being payable on the day of publication. In case of an important book, an advance payment is sometimes made on the signing of the Contract.

Clause 4. This is a usual clause and simply means that the publisher is responsible for the style in which the book shall be produced, the manner in which it shall be circulated to the trade, and the amount available for advertising purposes and how it shall be spent. And the only liability of the author in this respect is governed by the extent to which the author revises his proofs. The cost of correction of type is an expensive item, and the publisher is bound to fix some limit which he can allow for the author's corrections. What that amount should

be is a very debatable point, some publishers allowing only 10 per cent of the cost of composition, while others will go as high as 25 per cent. Some specify an exact amount either as a whole, as an average figure for every sheet of 32 pages, or even so much per printed page.

Clause 5. Publishers generally present a certain number of copies (usually six) free to the author, and allow the purchase of further copies on the same terms as the trade buy them : It should be noted that this concession applies to copies required for personal use, but not for sale.

Clause 6. This clause requires very little explanation. It provides for the reversion of the rights to the author in the event of the book being out of print for a certain period, or the demand having been exhausted. No very certain indication can be given as to when these points will be reached, for sometimes a book will sell to the extent of a few hundred copies only and then fall absolutely flat, while another, of apparently no greater merit, will go on selling. And the failure of the publisher should obviously release the rights in the author's favour. If some provision of this sort were not made an author might find himself bound down to an arrangement which was positively harmful.

Clause 7. Cheap editions are seldom issued until the estimated demand for the ordinary edition has been satisfied ; and obviously the publisher who has issued the book in its original form will want to publish the cheap editions as and when these seem likely to be of advantage. But this clause makes it possible for an author to make arrangements with a different publisher for cheap editions if the original publisher does not see his way to produce them.

Clause 8. Remainder clause : This largely relates to

the provision in Clause 6, when the sales of the book at the normal price have apparently ceased, and allows the publisher to sell any outstanding stock at the best figure possible. This is usually effected with job buyers who buy up stocks of books in this way at small figure, and sell them again at a profit. The publisher often has to let this stock go at cost price, or even less, which will explain why the return to the author is so very small.

The foregoing comments survey a typical novel contract but all contracts do not follow the same lines. Different forms are followed often for the various classes of books which a certain publisher issues ; and as almost every publisher has his own pet form of contract, so the varieties one may encounter are numerous. A publisher likes to have his contracts as nearly uniform as possible, for this simplifies his handling of a book. A certain routine is usually established in regard to publishing a book, and if there are no special points to be observed the process of production and selling will go along automatically in a well ordered office ; but confusion is apt to occur if the publisher has to stop constantly and refer to his contract to see whether he has the right to do this or that. Book-keeping is also simplified and mistakes are less likely to occur if the contract is on standard lines.

Before going on to deal with various types of contract we must detail the different methods of obtaining publication. Briefly, they are as follows :

(1) *Outright sale of copyright.* The majority of books published on these conditions are probably juvenile books, which are often commissioned by the publisher, though of course other books are sometimes sold in this way. While it may happen that the author thereby realises a lump sum down, he must take the chance of seeing the

publisher reap all the benefit of any success that may come to the work, either from sales as a book, or in regard to the subsidiary rights which have become more valuable of recent years. Novels, too, are sometimes sold on an outright basis, but here the unwisdom is more likely to become evident, for novels have a better chance of providing film or dramatic rights, or of running into various editions than the average juvenile book—that is if the story is one which has possibilities. Marjorie Bowen's "The Viper of Milan," and "The Honey Pot" by Countess Barcynska are instances of outright sales which proved big successes afterwards. Here is a specimen contract for an outright sale.

Contract No. 2

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT made this day of
19 BETWEEN (hereinafter
called the Author) of the one part AND the firm of
 (hereinafter called the Publishers) of the other
part WHEREBY it is mutually agreed as follows concerning
a book by the Author at present entitled :

1. The Publishers shall pay to the Author on the signing of this agreement by both parties a sum of £50 (Fifty pounds) as outright payment for the exclusive right of publication in any form in any language throughout the world.
2. The Publishers shall present to the Author on publication six presentation copies of the work and shall permit him to buy further copies if available for personal use at trade rates.
3. All details as to the manner of production publication and advertisement and the number and distribution thereof shall be left to the sole discretion of the Publishers who shall bear all expenses in connection therewith.
4. The Author guarantees to the Publishers that the said work is in no way whatever a violation or infringement of the copyright belonging to any other person and that it contains nothing of a libellous nature and that he and his

have full control of the publication and sale and terms of sale of the said work and shall publish it at a price to be left to their discretion.

3. The Author shall pay to the Publishers on signing this Agreement :
 - (a) A sum of Thirty Pounds (£30) which shall cover the total estimated cost of paper, printing, etc., of an edition of five hundred (500) copies and binding two hundred and fifty (250) of such copies in boards with a designed paper slip which shall be provided by the Author.
 - (b) A further sum of Six Pounds Five Shillings (£6 5s.) for similarly binding the remaining two hundred and fifty (250) copies as and when required.
4. The cost of making corrections in the proofs other than printers' errors shall be borne by the Author and settled in account.
5. The Publishers shall pay to the Author the full amounts realised by the sale of the said work less their commission of 15 per cent of the trade price, it being understood that the total discount made to the trade shall in no instance exceed one third of the published price.
6. The Publishers shall make up accounts to the 31st December in each year and render and pay the same to the Author not later than three months thereafter.
7. The Author retains the full copyright in the said work and all rights except those specifically granted to the Publishers, i.e., the right to publish the said work in volume form.
8. If after two years after the date of publication, the sale of the book shall, in the opinion of the Publishers, have ceased the Publishers shall notify the Author who shall within three calendar months thereafter take delivery of the remaining stock.
9. During the continuance of this Agreement the Publishers shall include the said work in their general catalogue and any other catalogues relating to poetry which they shall issue.

This does not provide for advertising the book beyond inclusion in the firm's catalogues ; and any newspaper or other announcements would be chargeable to the author.

Therefore, the author should insist that all advertising expenditure should be strictly subject to his approval.

(3) *Profit-sharing*. This is a very uncertain method to adopt, especially in regard to the ultimate return to the author. Some authors would perhaps prefer it, as the profit, supposing the book sells really well, would be greater than would probably be realised under a royalty arrangement. But if the book is financially a failure, then the author gets nothing. It is virtually a way of subsidising a book which is not thought to stand any very great chance of being commercially successful. A typical agreement on these lines is given below. If the division of profits can begin immediately the actual expenses of production and advertisement have been covered, so much the better, though most publishers would require a percentage to be allowed towards their overhead charges. The profit-sharing method is not generally recommended, for the results are often disappointing.

Contract No. 4

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT made this day
of 19 BETWEEN (hereinafter called the
Author of the one part AND (hereinafter
called the Publishers) of the other part WHEREBY it is
mutually agreed as follows :

1. The Author grants to the Publishers the sole and exclusive right of printing publishing and selling in book form in the English language throughout the British Empire and the United States of America a new work written by him entitled the MS. of which has already been delivered to the Publishers.
2. The Publishers shall publish the said work in one volume within six months of the date of this agreement unless otherwise mutually agreed at a price to be fixed in their discretion and may subsequently if and as and when they deem it expedient issue cheaper editions at such prices as they may think advisable.

3. The Publishers shall debit against the income derived by them from the publication of the said work and from the sale of any rights, plates, blocks or editions of the same (bound or in sheets) for the publication of the said work in the United States of America or elsewhere out of the United Kingdom, their charges at ordinary rates for composition, alterations of and additions to proofs (subject to Clause 4 hereof) moulding, stereotyping, electrotyping, blocks of illustrations, paper, printing, advertisements, binding, designs and blocks for binding, and all the incidental expenses of producing and publishing the said work, including the production of any plates, blocks or editions for the said United States of America or other country out of the United Kingdom, it being agreed that a special charge of fifteen per cent (15 per cent) on the said income is to be made by the Publishers to cover all establishment and travelling expenses, insurances, bookings, postages, packing and carriage for which no other charge is to be made. After deducting the said charges and expenses to be debited as aforesaid the balance of the said income shall be equally divided between the Author and the Publishers.
4. The Author agrees to restrict his corrections in proofs of other than printers' errors to a cost for printers' charges for the same not exceeding Ten pounds in respect of the said work, all excess charges beyond such Ten Pounds to be debited to the Author and settled in account.
5. All details as to the manner of production, publication and advertisement and the number and destination of free copies for review or otherwise shall be left to the sole discretion of the Publishers, but the Publishers shall in first publication of the said work supply the Author with six presentation copies.
6. The Author guarantees to the Publishers that the said work as regards both the text, photographs and other illustrations, shall be in no way whatever a violation or infringement of any copyright belonging to any other party and that it shall contain nothing of a libellous character, and agrees that he and his legal representatives shall and will hold the Publishers harmless from and indemnify them against all actions, claims and demands which may be taken against or made upon the Publishers on the ground that the said work

is such a violation or infringement or that it contains libelous matter.

7. The Publishers shall make up accounts of sales half-yearly to the 31st day of December and the 30th day of June and render the same to the Author within three months thereafter, making payment of any monies shown to be due at the same time.
8. The Author agrees to supply the Publishers with about photographs or other illustrations suitable for reproduction in the said work and to obtain all necessary consents to the reproduction of the same therein, it being understood that such photographs or other illustrations are to be free of copyright fees or payments for rights of reproduction by the Publishers whatsoever.
9. Should the Publishers at any time give notice that in their opinion the demand for the said work has ceased or should the said work be allowed to go out of print and the Publishers neglect for six months after due notice from the Author or his representatives to bring out a new edition, then in either of these cases all rights granted in this Agreement shall revert to the Author forthwith and without further procedure.
10. The expression "the Publishers" as used throughout this Agreement shall be deemed to include the person or persons or Company for the time being carrying on the business of the said whether under its present or any future style and the benefit of this Agreement shall be transmissible accordingly.

Allied to the sharing system, in a way, is the system whereby the author contributes a certain sum towards the cost of publication and probably gets a higher royalty in return, but in such a case as this he is fortunate if he gets very much more than his money back.

(4) The best method of all from the author's point of view is the royalty system, by which the publisher takes all the financial risk in producing a book, for then he has a very definite incentive to push its sales, and the author knows that in such a case the interests of both

- A royalty of ten per cent (10 per cent) of the published price on all copies sold of the English edition issued at the original price up to a sale of Three thousand five hundred (3,500) copies.
- A royalty of fifteen per cent (15 per cent) of the published price on all copies sold of such English edition over and above the said Three thousand five hundred (3,500) up to a sale of Five thousand (5,000) copies.
- A royalty of twenty per cent (20 per cent) of the published price on all copies sold of such English edition over and above the said Five thousand (5,000) copies.
- A royalty of Threepence (3d.) per copy on all copies sold of a Three shillings-and-sixpence (3s. 6d.) edition.
- A royalty of Twopence (2d.) per copy on all copies sold of a Two shillings-and-sixpence (2s. 6d.) edition.
- A royalty of One penny and one-fifth of a penny ($1\frac{1}{5}$ d.) per copy on all copies sold of a Two shilling (2s.) edition and *pro rata* if published at a less price.
- In calculating all the above royalties thirteen copies shall be reckoned as twelve.
3. The Publishers may also publish special cheap editions of the said novel in or for the Colonies and Dependencies of Great Britain and may dispose of the rights of publication for any Colonies and Dependencies for any such special editions and on all copies sold of such editions they shall pay to the Author a royalty of Threepence (3d.) per copy.
 4. That except as otherwise provided in this agreement all details as to the manner of production, publication and advertisement and the number and destination of free copies for review or otherwise shall be left to the sole discretion of the Publishers who shall bear all expense of production, publication and advertisement.
 5. The Publishers shall be at liberty to dispose of the rights of translation and of publication in any foreign language or to dispose of rights, plates, blocks or editions (bound or in sheets) for the purpose of publication of the said new novel in volume form in the United States of America or elsewhere outside the United Kingdom and it is agreed that if the Publishers shall sell any rights, plates or editions as in this clause men-

- tioned one-half of the net profit actually made by the Publishers from such sale shall be paid by them to the Author and the royalty arrangements mentioned in clause 2 shall not apply.
6. The Publishers shall pay to the Author on the day on which they first publish the said novel the sum of Twenty-five pounds (£25) in advance and on account of the royalties and other monies which may become due to the Author in any way under this agreement.
 7. The Author guarantees to the Publishers that the said new novel shall not in any way whatever be a violation or infringement of any copyright belonging to any other party and that it shall contain nothing of a libellous character and agrees that he and his legal representatives shall and will hold the Publishers harmless from and indemnify them against all actions, claims and demands which may be taken against or made upon the Publishers on the ground that the said new novel is such a violation or infringement or that it contains libellous matter.
 8. The Publishers shall pay to the Author ten per cent (10 per cent) of the net receipts from all copies of the said new novel sold as a "remainder," all copies of the said novel sold at or below two-fifths of the nominal selling price being considered to be sold as a "remainder." It is further provided that such ten per cent (10 per cent) shall be in lieu of the royalties on such copies hereinbefore mentioned.
 9. The Author agrees that he will restrict his corrections in proofs of other than printers' errors to a cost for printers' charges for the same not exceeding six pounds (£6) all excess charges beyond such £6 to be debited to the Author and settled in account.
 10. The Author shall be entitled to receive on publication six presentation copies of the said new novel.
 11. The Publishers shall make up accounts of sales half-yearly to the 30th day of June and the 31st day of December in each year and shall deliver the same on or before the following October 1st and April 1st and any amount found due shall be settled by cash within one month after those dates respectively.

12. The Author agrees to give the Publishers the first offer of the next three books to be written by him after the novel the subject of this agreement which said three books shall be novels of not less than 80,000 words each in length on the same terms and conditions as are contained in this agreement except that the advance on the day of publication shall be Twenty-five pounds (£25) or a sum equal to the amount earned in royalties during the first six months sales of the last preceding novel of the Author published by the Publishers in its dearest form whichever sum shall be the greater and the royalties on each of the said three further novels shall commence where those of the Author's immediately preceding novel left off at the time of acceptance by the Publishers of such three further novels respectively, that is to say for example, if the sales of in its dearest form exceed 3,500 copies the next following novel shall earn a royalty of fifteen per cent (15 per cent) from the first copy sold.

The offer of such three further novels to be made by the manuscript of each thereof being submitted to and left for reading with the Publishers at intervals of not less than six (6) months between each manuscript for such period not exceeding one month as they may require, the Publishers to decide within such one month whether or not they will acquire the same on the conditions aforesaid.

13. The expression the "Publishers" as used throughout this agreement shall be deemed to include the person or persons or Company for the time being carrying on the business of the said whether under its present or any future style and the benefit of this agreement shall be transmissible accordingly.

Contract No. 6 (B)

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT made this day
of 19 BETWEEN (hereinafter
called the Author) of the one part AND the firm of
 (hereinafter called the Publishers) of the other part
WHEREBY it is mutually agreed as follows concerning a
novel by the Author and provisionally entitled :
the manuscript of which has already been delivered.

1. The Publishers shall during the legal term of copyright have the exclusive right of producing and publishing the said novel in volume form in the English language throughout the British Empire except Canada at a published price of about Seven Shillings and Sixpence (7s. 6d.) net in the first instance subject to the conditions following :
2. The Publishers shall publish the said novel during the Autumn of 19 unless by mutual consent of the parties hereto.
3. The Author guarantees to the Publishers that the said novel is in no way whatever a violation or infringement of copyright belonging to any other person and that it shall contain nothing of a libellous nature and that he and his legal representatives shall and will hold the Publishers harmless from and indemnify them against all actions claims and demands which may be taken against or made upon the Publishers on the grounds that the said novel is such a violation or that it contains anything libellous.
4. The Publishers shall make up accounts of sales half yearly to the 30th day of June and the 31st day of December in each year and deliver and settle these within three months thereafter respectively making payment to the Author as follows :
 - (a) A royalty of Ten per cent (10 per cent) of the published price of all copies sold of the English edition issued at its original price up to Two thousand (2,000) copies ; a royalty of 12½ per cent (Twelve and one half per cent) on all copies sold from Two thousand (2,000) to Five thousand (5,000) ; a royalty of Fifteen per cent (15 per cent) on all copies sold from Five thousand (5,000) to Seven thousand five hundred (7,500) ; a royalty of Twenty per cent (20 per cent) on all copies sold from Seven thousand five hundred (7,500) to Ten thousand (10,000) ; and a royalty of Twenty-five per cent (25 per cent) on all copies sold thereafter.
 - (b) A royalty of Ten per cent (10 per cent) of the published price of all copies sold of any cheaper edition published at more than Two shillings (2s.), a royalty of Three half-pence (1½d.) per copy on all copies of any edition

published at 2s. and *pro rata* on all editions published at a less price than Two shillings (2s.).

- (c) A royalty of Threepence (3d.) per copy on all copies sold to the Colonies or as a special Colonial edition.

In calculating the above royalties twelve copies shall be reckoned as twelve and no royalty shall be payable on copies given away in the interests of the said novel.

- (d) Ten per cent (10 per cent) of the sum received from the sale of any copies of the said novel as a remainder the Author having first been given the option of purchasing some or all of such copies at the remainder price.
 - (e) A sum of One Hundred Pounds (£100) on day of publication in advance and on account of all monies due under this agreement.
5. The Author shall be entitled to six presentation copies of the said novel and shall be able to purchase further copies for personal use at the lowest trade price.
 6. All details as to the manner of production publication and advertisement and the number and destination of free copies shall be left to the sole discretion of the publishers who shall bear all expenses in connection therewith except the amount (if any) of Author's corrections other than printer's errors in proofs in excess of £6 which extra amount shall be borne by the Author and settled in account.
 7. The Author shall be free to arrange with any other Publisher after five years from the date of first publication in England by the said Publishers or sooner by mutual consent of the parties hereto, after giving the Publishers six months' notice in writing during which six months the Publishers shall still be at liberty to issue the said novel in cheaper form, for the re-issue of the said novel in cheaper form if the said Publishers have not before that time issued a cheaper edition of the novel themselves upon repayment to the Publishers of the unearned advance (if any).
 8. If the Publishers give notice at any time that in their opinion the demand for the said novel has ceased or if the said novel be allowed to go out of print and they neglect to issue a new edition within six months of having received

9. If payment should not be made by the Publishers of monies due or statements delivered to the Author as agreed herein within three months after the date of a written demand from the Author or her representatives for such payment then this Agreement shall be considered to be cancelled and all rights granted in it shall revert to the Author forthwith and without further notice.
10. The Publishers shall have the option of publishing the next two novels which the Author may write after the novel the subject of this agreement which said two novels shall be of approximately eighty thousand (80,000) words each in length on the same terms and conditions as previously detailed in this agreement except that the advance on day of publication of each of the said novels shall be One hundred pounds (£100) or the sum which shall have been earned in royalties by the about Seven Shillings and sixpence (7s. 6d.) edition of the preceding novel in each case during the first six months of publication whichever sum shall be the greater and the royalties of each of the said option novels shall begin where those of the preceding novel left off, that is to say for example if the sales of in its dearest form exceed 2,000 copies the next following novel shall earn a royalty of Twelve and a half per cent ($12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent) from the first copy sold. The Publishers shall give their decision to exercise such option within six weeks of delivery to them of complete copy or proofs of the novels in each case. In the event of the Publishers declining either of such option novels their option on future work shall be cancelled. The Publishers agree to publish the said option novels if they accept the same within six months of the date of delivery to them of complete copy of the novel in each case but the Publishers shall not be obliged to publish any two novels within six months of one another.
11. All monies due under this agreement shall be paid to the Author's representatives whose receipt shall be a full and valid discharge of the Publishers' obligation.

After the preamble, the rights granted to the Publisher are specified. A permits the publisher to have *all book rights in all parts of the world*, without any stipulation as to date of first publication—this is an exceedingly comprehensive right : B restricts the publisher's right to publish in the English language in a certified specified area and within a certain period, which leaves the author free to reap whatever advantage may be possible from the sale of his rights in other parts of the world.

A then goes on to indicate the royalties payable to the author, and we may as well examine these now.

On the English edition the royalties in the two contracts run pretty well together, sometimes one leading and sometimes the other as the sales reach various figures ; but where B has a strong pull is in the calculation of copies on which payment is made. A specifies that thirteen copies shall be paid for as twelve, while B specifies that the actual number of copies sold shall be paid for, which adds a penny to every shilling that the English sales would otherwise produce for the author. The thirteen as twelve basis arose because of the practice of allowing the book trade an extra copy in the dozen, but it is a welcome sign that this practice is dying out. The majority of good publishers now pay royalties on the actual number of copies sold.

The Colonial royalty is identical, and the principle on which this is reckoned has already been explained.

Clause 5 in A provides that publisher and author share equally in the profits arising from American or translation rights ; B does not concede these rights to the publisher, so the question of payment thereon does not arise.

Advance on account of royalties. This question has been dealt with previously, but it is evident that B is specially favoured.

Libel Clause : The one included here is a customary clause, but some of the publishers use the one drafted by the Incorporated Society of Authors and approved by the Publishers' Association—the text of which is quoted later in this chapter.

The royalty on copies sold off cheaply as remainders is generally 10 per cent of the amount received, so no more need be said on this point.

The next big point on which these contracts differ is on the question of future books. A requires the author to submit *three* books on much the same terms as for the first, except that if a particular book sells well he gets a bigger royalty on the next one, which benefit automatically passes to the later books. B provides for the submission of *two* books under similar conditions, but with this addition : that if the publishers decline the first of these option books the author is released from his obligation to offer them any others. This may seem a small point, but it may make a big difference to the author. The question of an author binding himself to submit his future work to the same publisher is one which arouses much controversy.

The publisher's view is that very few early novels result in a profit, and having expended good money in starting an author on the literary path it is only just that he should have an opportunity of recouping himself on following books. Certainly a publisher is less likely to take up an author for a single book for another publisher to get the benefit of his initial advertising and other efforts. That is why "options" are desired. Now for the question of release in case of refusal of any one book. Of course publisher number one doesn't like this but then very few firms would take a book that had already been declined by one publisher knowing full well that the

author was obliged to send the following books to him. Instances could be cited where books, not considered suitable by the publisher who has the option, have had to be put on one side because of this difficulty, with the consequent loss to the author of several months of work.

Further points that appear in B, which are absent from A, are; (1), the reversion to the author of the cheaper edition rights if the publishers do not within a specified period exercise their right in this direction; and (2), the termination of the contract if the publishers fail to observe certain conditions. Something of the kind is advisable, or an author may be tied indefinitely to an unsatisfactory publisher who has allowed a book to go out of print, and who will neither reprint nor allow anyone else to do so.

It may be pertinent here to examine a contract made with another publisher for a first novel with an eye to the terms more than anything else, for otherwise it does not differ overmuch from the average for this type of book, except perhaps in phraseology. After the formal preamble and ordinary libel clause, the contract stipulates that the exclusive right of producing and publishing the work throughout the British Empire and the United States of America shall rest with the publishers, which is certainly a very wide market. Mark that it does not say "volume" or "book" publication.

3. The Publishers shall during the legal term of copyright have the exclusive right of producing and publishing the work in the United Kingdom, the Colonies, India, and the United States of America. The Publishers shall have the entire control of the publication and sale and terms of sale of the book, and the Author shall not during the continuance of this agreement (without the consent of the Publishers) publish or allow to be published any abridgment, portion, translation or dramatised version of the work.

Now we come to the royalties :

4. The Publishers agree to pay the Author the following royalties, that is to say :
 - (a) On the British edition a royalty of 10 per cent (ten per cent) on the published price of all copies sold, 13 copies being reckoned as 12.

Not exactly generous, perhaps. In case the book turns out to be a good seller, there certainly ought to be some increase in royalty after a certain figure.

- (b) In the event of the Publishers being successful in arranging for copyright publication in the United States of America they shall receive as agents for the Author ten per cent of the sums realised in royalties.

This refers to the possibility of the book being manufactured in America, and obtaining copyright, and is not an unfair deduction.

- (c) In the event of the Publishers disposing of copies or editions at a reduced rate for sale in the Colonies, the United States of America, or elsewhere, they agree to pay the Author a royalty of 10 per cent of the amount realised by such sales.

As explained elsewhere copies sold, either in sheets or bound, to these markets realise a very moderate price, and 10 per cent of that amount is an average sum under this head.

- (d) That the Publishers shall pay to the Author 10 per cent (ten per cent) of the net receipts from all copies of the said volume sold as a remainder. It is further provided that such 10 per cent (ten per cent) shall be in lieu of other royalty and the Publishers shall always give the Author the first refusal of any remainder of the said volume which they are desirous of selling at remainder prices. Should such surplus stock or remainder,

however, be sold by the Publishers at less than cost price, then no royalty shall be payable to the Author on copies sold.

- (e) No royalties shall be paid on any copies given away for review and in the interest of the work.
- (f) In the event of the Publishers deciding to re-issue this work in a cheaper form, the royalties payable to the Author upon such copies shall be the same as upon the British editions as hereinbefore stated, provided such do not exceed ten per cent of the published price, which shall be the maximum upon all copies sold (13 being reckoned 12).

These are ordinary provisions, and are to be found in most contracts.

- 6. In event of the Publishers disposing of serial rights of the said work after publication in book form the net amount of the profits derived from such sale shall be equally divided between the said Author and the Publishers.

The serial rights, either before or after book publication, should not be in the publisher's hands, but should be dealt with separately ; and in any case one half of the profits is too big a share for the publisher.

- 7. In event of profits being realised from the sale of serial rights before publication, or dramatic or cinematograph rights through the agency of the Publishers the Publishers shall be entitled to 25 per cent of the net profits provided that the Publishers be authorised in writing by the Author to act as his agent for the negotiations of the said dramatic or cinematograph rights.
- 8. All other extraneous profits, that is to say, profits not derived from the sale of copies of the book, shall be equally divided between the Author and the Publishers.

The same remarks would apply to these two clauses as to Clause 6, although the percentage mentioned in

Clause 7 is twenty-five per cent. All three clauses may be described as obnoxious, as being outside the publisher's real province ; which is to produce and publish books. The chances of his being able to dispose of any of these outside rights, with the exception, perhaps, of the American rights, by his own personal effort, are very small, and there seems very little reason why he should get a share of the profits without doing something to earn it. He will most likely have to employ the services of an agent of some kind, whose remuneration would naturally be calculated on the total amount, so that the author's share would be actually below the apparent figure.

Then follow clauses covering authors' corrections on the proofs, delivery of royalty statements, reversion of the rights on account of the book going out of print, and then we come to the clauses covering the publisher's option on future books.

13. The Author agrees to give the Publishers the offer of the next five novels written by him on the terms of the payment by the Publishers of the following royalties, that is to say :
 - (a) On the British Edition of the first novel written by him after the work, which is the subject of the present agreement, a royalty of ten per cent (10 per cent) of the published price of the first two thousand (2,000) copies sold, and twelve and a half per cent ($12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent) of the published price of all subsequent copies sold (13 copies being reckoned as 12 in each instance).
 - (b) On the British edition of his second novel a royalty of twelve and a half per cent ($12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent) of the published price of the first two thousand (2,000) copies sold, and fifteen per cent (15 per cent) of the published price of all subsequent copies sold (13 copies being reckoned as 12 in each instance).
 - (c) On the British edition of his third novel a royalty of fifteen per cent (15 per cent) of the published price of the first five thousand (5,000) copies sold, and twenty per

- cent (20 per cent) of the published price of all subsequent copies sold (13 copies being reckoned as 12 in each instance).
- (d) On the British edition of his fourth and fifth novels a royalty of fifteen per cent (15 per cent) of the published price of the first two thousand five hundred (2,500) copies sold, and twenty per cent (20 per cent) of the published price of all subsequent copies sold (13 copies being reckoned as 12 in each instance).
 - (e) In the case of the novels referred to in subsections *b*, *c*, and *d* of this clause, the publishers agree to pay to the Author within one week of the day of publication the royalty calculated (in accordance with sections *b*, *c* and *d* of this clause) of all copies sold of the British edition on the day of publication, but thereafter the royalties shall be paid semi-annually.
 - (f) In all other particulars, except as herein specified, the terms of this agreement shall be applicable to the five succeeding novels.

Let it at once be said that five future novels are too many to bind oneself for under one contract, especially when there is no provision for release in the event of the publisher declining one or more of the novels for any reason. Not the least objection to the clauses just quoted is that, except for better royalties in the British edition, the other terms of the agreement apply to all the "option" novels covered by the contract.

The question of "option" novels is very important and has an important bearing on the value of a contract. The first book under a specific contract may receive a fair royalty, but if several books have to be offered on practically the same terms, especially when the outside rights are included, the contract can only be described as preposterous. It would even be better to accept a slightly lower royalty on the first book, if the royalties on say two or three future books are of the progressive

order, and the publisher's interest is confined to the book rights. But the author must not expect, except under very unusual circumstances, to get more than a 20 per cent royalty. Anything higher than this is impracticable, as the chapter dealing with production costs shows.

While we are dealing with novel contracts it is worth while examining two others; one for a "first novel" with another firm, and an ordinary novel contract with yet another publisher.

Contract No. 7

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT made this day of
19 BETWEEN (Author) of the
one part AND the firm of (Publishers) of
the other part regarding the publication in volume form
in the English language throughout the British Empire
except Canada of a novel by the Author entitled :

1. In consideration of the stipulations and covenants of the respective parties hereto the Author hereby grants to the Publishers for a period of seven years from the date of first publication of the said book the right of printing and publishing the said work in volume form in the British Empire except Canada and the Publishers shall publish the said work within one year of the date of this agreement unless prevented by circumstances over which they have no control.
2. The Author agrees to make certain alterations in the manuscript of the said work in accordance with the suggestions made by the Publishers and the acceptance of this contract by the Publishers shall be contingent on the said alterations meeting with their approval which shall not be unreasonably withheld.
3. The Publishers shall pay to the Author on the day of publication of the said work a sum of Fifty Pounds (£50) in advance and on account of the following royalties :
 - (a) A royalty of Ten per cent (10 per cent) on all copies sold of the full priced English edition up to two

thousand (2,000) copies ; Fifteen per cent (15 per cent) to Five thousand (5,000) ; and Twenty per cent (20 per cent) on all copies of the full-priced English edition sold above Five Thousand (5,000).

- (b) A royalty of Ten per cent (10 per cent) on the price realised for all copies sold as a Colonial edition.
 - (c) A royalty of Seven and one-half per cent ($7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent) on all copies of any edition sold at a published price below one half of the original published price.
 - (d) Ten per cent of the sum received from the sale of the said work as a remainder should the amount received be more than cost price.
4. The Publishers shall present to the Author six free copies of the said work and the Author shall be at liberty to purchase further copies for personal use at two-thirds of the published price.
 5. The Publishers shall make up accounts to 30th June and 31st December in each year and shall render and pay any money due to the Author within three months thereafter.
 6. The Publishers agree that the published price of the said novel shall be not less than Six Shillings (6s.) in the first instance.
 7. The Author shall be responsible for any action for libel or for infringement of copyright which may arise from the contents of the said work.
 8. If the Publishers do not decide to publish a cheap edition of the said work when the sales of the high-priced edition permit the Author shall be entitled to arrange with another Publisher for such cheap editions but unless otherwise agreed between the Author and the Publishers such cheap editions shall not be published until the expiration of two years from the date of first publication of the said work.
 9. The Publishers shall bear the entire cost and risk of printing and publication in the British Empire except Canada except only that the cost of Author's corrections in proofs exceeding 25 per cent of the cost of composition (other than printers' errors) shall be borne by the Author and settled in account.
 10. If payment should not be made by the Publishers to the

Author of monies due or statements delivered as agreed herein three months after the date of a written demand from the Author or his representatives for such payment then this agreement shall be considered cancelled and all rights in the said work granted in this agreement shall revert to the Author forthwith and without further procedure.

11. All dramatic film translation and other rights excepting volume publication in the aforesaid territory are retained exclusively by the Author.

Supplementary clause. The Publishers shall have the option of publishing the next two novels which the Author may write after the novel ————— each novel to extend to not less than 65,000 words, and shall give their decision in each case within one month of receipt of the MS. in form ready for press provided that each of the said novels shall be delivered to the Publishers at intervals of not less than four months between each MS. but should they decide not to publish the first of the said novels then their option on the second novel shall terminate.

Contract No. 8

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT made this day
of 19 BETWEEN (hereinafter
called the Author of the one part AND
(hereinafter called the Publishers) of the other part WHERE-
BY it is mutually agreed as follows respecting a work by the
Author provisionally entitled :

1. The Publishers shall have the exclusive right of producing and publishing the said work in volume form in the English language at the published price of about Seven Shillings and Sixpence (7s. 6d.) net or under within the limits of the British Empire except Canada subject to the conditions following :
2. The Publishers shall publish the said work within six months of the date of this agreement unless by mutual consent of both parties, at the nominal selling price of about Seven Shillings and Sixpence (7s. 6d.) net in the first instance.
3. The Author shall be responsible for and indemnify the Publishers in respect of any action which may be taken

against them on the ground that the said work contains matter which is libellous scandalous or an infringement of another copyright of any other person.

4. Accounts of the sales of the work shall be made up to the 31st day of March and the 30th day of September in each year, and delivered and settled within three months thereafter the Publishers paying the Author as follows :

(a) A royalty of ten per cent (10 per cent) of the published price of all copies which they shall sell of the original English edition up to Two thousand (2,000) ; Fifteen per cent (15 per cent) of the published price of all copies sold of the original English edition above Two thousand (2,000) and up to Three thousand (3,000) and a royalty of Twenty per cent (20 per cent) of the published price of all copies sold thereafter.

(b) A royalty of Ten per cent (10 per cent) of the published price of all copies which they shall sell of any cheaper edition published at a price of over Two Shillings (2s.) and a royalty of Seven-and-a-half per cent ($7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent) of the published price of all copies which they shall sell of any cheaper edition published at a price of Two Shillings (2s.) and under.

In calculating the above royalties twelve copies shall be reckoned as twelve and no royalties shall be paid on copies given away in the interests of the said work.

(c) A royalty of Threepence (3d.) per copy on all copies sold of any Colonial edition of the said work.

(d) Ten per cent (10 per cent) of the sum received from the sale of any copies of the said work as a remainder the Author having first been given the option of purchasing some or all of such copies at the "remainder price."

(e) A sum on day of publication in advance and on account of the above royalties equal to the amount earned in royalties on subscription sales up to that day.

5. All details as to the manner of production, publication and advertisement and the number and destination of free copies shall be left to the sole discretion of the Publishers who shall bear all expenses in connection therewith.

6. The Author shall receive on publication six presentation copies of the said work and shall be entitled to purchase further copies for personal use but not for re-sale at the lowest trade price.
7. The Author shall be free to arrange with any other Publishers after two years from the date of first British publication at about Seven Shillings and sixpence (7s. 6d.) or sooner by mutual consent of the parties hereto for the re-issue of the said work in any form at a less price than Seven Shillings and Sixpence (7s. 6d.) not covered by the Publishers of the said Seven Shillings and Sixpence (7s. 6d.) edition but the said Publishers shall first be given the option of themselves bringing out such new editions as the Author desires.
8. If the Publishers give notice at any time that in their opinion the demand for the said work has ceased, or if the said work be allowed to go out of print to the extent of their having less than one dozen copies in stock and they neglect to issue a new edition within six months of having received written notice thereof, then in either of these cases, all rights under this agreement shall revert to the Author without prejudice to royalties and other monies due to him from the Publishers.

The general conditions of the first of these are very similar to the one just examined, called B, though the term for the two "option" novels are left open for settlement as and when these are accepted. The other one is for a single novel, by a man already well known to the public, and the royalties are calculated accordingly, and there is no claim on future books. In each case the territory allotted to the publisher is the British Empire except Canada.

We now come to look at a contract for a non-fiction book, taking for our example one recently arranged for, a volume of memoirs by a lady well-known in society. This naturally meant very good terms, and should

- (a) A royalty of Twenty per cent (20 per cent) of the published price of all copies sold of the English edition issued at the original price up to Three thousand (3,000) copies and Twenty-five per cent (25 per cent) on all copies sold thereafter.
 - (b) A royalty of Ten per cent (10 per cent) of the published price of all copies sold of any cheaper edition published at less than half the original published price.
 - (c) A royalty of Ten per cent (10 per cent) of the net receipts of sales of all copies sold to the British Colonies.

In calculating the above royalties twelve copies shall be reckoned as twelve and no royalty shall be paid on copies given away in the interests of the said work.
 - (d) Ten per cent (10 per cent) of the sum received from the sale of any copies of the said work as a remainder the Author having first been given the option of purchasing some or all of such copies at the remainder price.
 - (e) A sum of One Thousand Guineas (£1,050) on the day of publication in advance and on account of all monies due under this agreement.
5. The Author shall be entitled to receive on publication six presentation copies of the book and shall be able to purchase further copies for personal use at the lowest trade price.
 6. All details as to the manner of production publication and advertisement and the number and distribution of free copies for review or otherwise shall be left to the sole discretion of the Publishers who shall bear all expenses in connection therewith except the amount (if any) of Author's corrections in proof other than printers' errors in excess of £6 which extra amount shall be borne by the Author and settled in account.
 7. The Author shall be free to arrange with any other publisher after five years from the date of first publication in England by the said Publishers or sooner by mutual consent of the parties hereto for the re-issue of the said work in cheaper form if the Publishers have not themselves before that time issued a cheaper edition upon repayment to the Publishers of the unearned advance (if any). The Author shall give the Publishers six months' notice in writing of her intention during which six months the Publishers shall still be at liberty to issue the said work in cheaper form,

8. If the Publishers give notice at any time that in their opinion the demand for the said work has ceased or if the said work be allowed to go out of print and they neglect to issue a new edition within six months of having received written notice thereof then in either of these cases all rights conveyed under this Agreement shall revert to the Author without prejudice to royalties due.
9. If payment should not be made by the Publishers of monies due or statements delivered to the Author as agreed herein within three months after the date of a written demand from the Author or her representatives for such payment then this Agreement shall be considered to be cancelled and all rights granted in this Agreement shall revert to the Author without further notice.
10. The Author agrees to supply the Publishers with about sixteen (16) photographs or other illustrations suitable for reproduction in the said work and to obtain all necessary consents to the reproduction of the same therein it being understood that such photographs or other illustrations are to be free of copyright fees or payments for rights of reproduction by the Publishers whatsoever.
11. The term "Publishers" used throughout this agreement shall be deemed to include the said firm of _____ under its present as well as any future style and the benefit of the said agreement shall be transmissible accordingly.

The name of the author will probably ensure big sales, and therefore the publisher can afford to pay a royalty of one fifth of the published price on the first three thousand copies, and one quarter on sales above that number—in respect of the English edition at the original price. On cheaper editions and copies sold for the Colonial markets the royalty will be but 10 per cent of their respective prices, for reasons already explained, and of course we have the stipulation that the exact number of copies sold shall be counted in regard to royalties. Naturally a book of this importance can stand a big amount as

an advance on account of royalties. The terms for books of lesser importance would naturally be on a more modest scale. For instance, the account of a big scientific discovery, if written by the discoverer personally, would command a better price than if written at second hand. Or a book of travel would depend upon the prominence of the personality or whether the journey described covered fresh ground or not, and so on down to those labours of love undertaken by enthusiasts, but for which there seems to be but little public demand, and for which the financial returns would be correspondingly small.

It is difficult to give any very detailed or definite indication of the royalties paid on these general books, as so very much depends upon their nature, both of subject and treatment, and the position of the author. But it should be noted that where photographs are necessary to illustrate the book, the publisher generally looks for these to be supplied to him free of cost ; and for the author to arrange for any permissions to reproduce which may be necessary.

Now a few words regarding American agreements. These will often be found to differ little from English contracts apart from phraseology, and the terms. Here is a fairly representative contract for a novel.

Contract No. 10

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT made this day
of 19 BETWEEN party of the
first part (hereinafter called the Author) and
party of the second part (hereinafter called the Pub-
lishers) WITNESSETH that WHEREAS the Author has
delivered to the Publishers the Manuscript of a novel, at
present entitled
which novel the Publishers agree to publish in the Fall of
19 on the terms and conditions hereinafter appearing

IT IS HEREBY AGREED BETWEEN the Author and the Publishers as follows :

1. That in consideration of the stipulations and covenants of the respective parties hereto, the Author hereby grants to the Publishers the exclusive right of printing and publishing the above novel in volume form in the United States of America and the British Empire during the full term of copyright and of all renewals thereof.
2. That the Author guarantees to the Publishers that the said novel is in no way whatsoever a violation of any copyright belonging to any other party and that it contains nothing of an objectionable or libellous character and that she and her legal representatives shall and will hold the Publishers harmless and keep indemnified the Publishers from all suits and all manner of claims, proceedings and expenses which may be taken or incurred on the ground that the said novel is such violation or contains anything objectionable or libellous.
3. That the Publishers shall take all steps that may be necessary under the United States and British Copyright Acts to secure their own rights and those of the Author in the said novel.
4. That all details as to the manner of production and publication and the manner and distribution of free copies shall be left to the discretion of the Publishers who shall bear all expenses of production publication and advertisement.
5. That the Publishers shall pay to the Author the following royalties :
 - (a) A royalty of fifteen per cent (15 per cent) of the catalogue (retail) list price of all copies sold in the United States.
 - (b) A royalty of seven and one half per cent ($7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent) of the catalogue (retail) list price of all copies sold in the Dominion of Canada.
 - (c) If the Publishers should arrange for the transfer of the cheap rights in the said novel from themselves to some other publisher they shall pay to the Author fifty per cent (50 per cent) of the net proceeds of such sale.
 - (d) A royalty of ten per cent (10 per cent) of the actual net price received for all copies sold at "remainder" prices (except when sold at or below cost).

- (e) On British Empire, except Canadian rights, they will pay sixty per cent (60 per cent) of the amount received by them from such publication.
6. That the Publishers further agree to pay to the Author on the signing of this Agreement the sum of One Thousand Dollars (1,000 dollars) in advance and on account of the said royalties.
 7. That the Publishers shall submit to the Author statement of sales in February and August of each year and shall settle for the same in cash before the end of the said months of February and August.
 8. That if at any time during the continuance of this Agreement the said novel shall in the opinion of the Publishers be unsaleable, the Publishers shall notify the Author in writing and for two months thereafter she shall have the right or option to buy from the Publishers all copies on hand at the cost of manufacture and upon failure of the said Author to exercise this right or option by paying for the same in cash at the said time, the Publishers shall dispose of the same as they see fit and shall thereupon transfer to the Author all rights herein granted in the said novel and this contract shall terminate.
 9. That the Author shall be entitled to receive on publication six presentation copies of the said novel and shall have the right to purchase further copies for personal use at the lowest wholesale price.
 10. That the rights of translation and all other rights not herein specified are reserved by the Author.

This contract gives the publisher the right to publish the work in the British Empire as well as the United States, but the general rule is that the American publisher covers the Canadian market where it is not the subject of a separate agreement, the reason being that Canada, adjoining the U.S.A., is more conveniently situated territorially, and as a general rule Canadian booksellers prefer the American-made book.

Royalties, it will be seen, are less than those obtainable from English publishers. First, the country to be covered by the travellers is so vast that it costs more to bring it to the notice of the booksellers there than it does here—which adds to the initial cost, so that the sales have to reach a bigger figure than in England before an improvement in royalty is possible. Against this is the fact that there is a larger public in America, so that the author's ultimate receipts are often better from across the Atlantic.

The royalty on copies sold to Canada is usually one-half of the American figure, because the books are exported, and special conditions generally apply to goods coming under this heading.

Clause 5 (c) requires a few words of explanation. Some American publishers issue a restricted number of novels in cheap edition form, whilst others make a feature of this kind of publication. The former kind of publisher will often make an arrangement with a firm of the latter type and this clause allows the original publisher to retain control of the cheap market so that it does not clash with the better-priced edition.

Clause 5 (e) is the equivalent of the American rights clause in an English agreement, but should not be taken as indicative of the general policy. More often than not the American contract is restricted to the United States and Canada.

The rest of the agreement has already been covered in observations on English contracts.

The following agreement covering the publication of a book by a well-known traveller will serve as an example of those made for non-fiction books, with the same observations as apply in England.

Contract No. 11

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT entered into this
day of 192 BETWEEN

hereinafter for the purposes of this agreement called the
Author of the one part and hereinafter
for the purposes of this agreement called the Publishers of
the other part WHEREBY it is mutually agreed between
the parties hereto for themselves and their respective exe-
cutors administrators and assigns (or successors as the case
may be) that the Proprietor (Author) in whom copyright
shall remain vested but who empowers the Publishers to
take in the name of the Proprietor but at the Publishers'
expense any action legal or otherwise that the Publishers may
consider necessary to protect their rights in the work in
which case if the Publishers recover any profits or damages
they shall first apply the same towards indemnifying them-
selves against all costs charges and expenses whatsoever
incurred by them in connection with the recovery assigns to
the Publishers for the legal term of copyright the exclusive
right of printing reprinting and publishing in book form in
the English language in the United States of America and
Canada the work to be entitled for the purposes of this
agreement on the following terms :

1. The Proprietor has delivered to the Publishers the complete material for the said work, and the Proprietor undertakes to revise all proofs and pass the same for press with reasonable despatch.
2. The Publishers shall print bind publish and advertise the said book at their sole cost in such editions and at such prices as they may deem advisable and they shall have the entire control of the publication distribution of free copies terms of sale and the right to grant permission for quotation whether for the purpose of publicity or otherwise subsequent to the publication in book form and shall publish the book within six months of this agreement,
3. The Publishers shall pay royalties to the Proprietor on sales of the said book in the United States during the legal term of unrestricted copyright at the rate of Fifteen per cent (15 per cent) of the published price of every copy sold

and on sales of the said book in Canada during the legal term of unrestricted copyright at the rate of Ten per cent (10 per cent) of the published price of every copy sold and shall pay to the Proprietor on the day of publication of the said book the sum of Three Hundred Pounds (£300) in advance and on account of the above-mentioned royalties.

4. Should the Publishers find it convenient at any time after a remunerative sale shall have ceased to sell any copies of the said book as a remainder that is to say at less than one-third of the published price, they shall pay to the Proprietor a royalty at the rate of Ten per cent (10 per cent) of the net proceeds from such sales.
5. The cost of Author's corrections in proof not exceeding a sum equivalent to Twenty-five per cent (25 per cent) of the cost of composition is covered by this agreement but all further sums included through Author's corrections in proofs exceeding this amount other than printers' errors shall be charged to the Proprietor.
6. The Proprietor hereby warrants to the Publishers that the said work is in no way whatever a violation of any existing copyright and that it contains nothing libellous and will indemnify the Publishers against any loss injury or damage legal costs of expenses properly incurred occasional to or incurred by the Publishers in consequence of any breach (unknown to the Publishers) of this warranty.
7. Should the said book become out of print and remain so for six months and should the Publishers neglect to reprint it within a period of six months after receipt of notice in writing from the Proprietor or should any payment due be delayed for more than one month by reason of bankruptcy or otherwise then this agreement shall be cancelled and all rights in the said book shall revert to the Proprietor and the Proprietor shall then be entitled if he shall exercise his rights within one month to purchase from the Publishers all or any plates moulds or engravings or the like produced especially for the said work at cost price less a reasonable amount for wear and tear.
8. Accounts between the parties to this agreement shall be taken half-yearly to March and September and paid within one month.

9. The office books of the Publishers in so far as they relate to the sales of the Proprietor's work shall be open to inspection by the Proprietor or his representatives duly appointed by him at all reasonable times.
10. The Proprietor shall be entitled to six free copies of the said work free of charge and to such further number of copies as he may require for his own use but not for sale at trade rates.
11. The term "Publishers" throughout this Agreement shall be held to include the person or persons or Company for the time being carrying on the business of the said
under its present as well as any future style and the benefit of this agreement shall be transmissible accordingly.

* * * * *

The *Libel Clause* has been the subject of so much discussion that a special word here would not be out of place. The term is usually applied to the clause in an agreement which deals with the possibility of trouble arising through an author infringing the copyright of another person or because the contents of a book may be considered unsuitable for publication. One can quite understand that a publisher would wish to protect himself as effectively as possible against loss in the event of unwelcome attention being focussed upon him because of anything occurring which comes under these heads, but it was considered in certain quarters that the usual arrangement was perhaps more favourable to the publisher than to author. Accordingly the Society of Authors, after consultation with the Publishers Association, drafted a clause which seemed to meet the position, and relieves the author of a part of the financial responsibility in certain cases where his fault is partly the result of ignorance.

The clause is as follows :

The Author hereby warrants to the Publisher that the said work

is in no way whatever a violation of any existing copyright and that it contains nothing obscene, indecent or (with the intention of the Author) libellous and will indemnify the Publisher against any loss, injury or damage, including any legal costs or expenses properly incurred, occasioned to or incurred by the Publisher in consequence of any breach (unknown to the Publisher) of this warranty. And it is hereby further agreed that in the following cases any loss, injury or damage (including any legal costs or expenses as aforesaid) occasioned to or incurred by either the Author or the Publisher or both shall be contributed to and borne and paid by the Author and the Publisher in equal shares namely :

- (1) Where any matter contained in the said work shall be held to constitute a libel upon a person to whom it shall appear the Author did not intend to refer.
- (2) Where an unsuccessful action is brought in respect of an alleged libel contained in the said work ; and
- (3) Where any proceedings are threatened, instituted or prosecuted for any alleged libel contained in the said work and the claim is settled before judgment with the consent of the Author and the Publisher.

This forms a part of the usual contract of some publishers who are members of the Association.

An author should always be able to ensure that he is not encroaching on another copyright, (the following chapter deals with this subject) or that there is nothing in his work which is unfit for general publication. The difficulty is mainly likely to occur in regard to libel, for all sorts of unusual things may be held to come under this head. So it is as well to see that one is adequately protected, though the innocent author's chances of encountering trouble are infinitesimal.

CHAPTER VIII

COPYRIGHT

OF all the subjects of which authors generally are woefully ignorant, copyright is entitled to first place. Very few authors understand even the elementary principles of copyright, and fewer still have any knowledge of the legal aspect of this important subject. It is true that for practical purposes nothing beyond elementary knowledge is either necessary or desirable. The whole question of copyright bristles with legal complications. Many books have been written on the subject, but it is a point which rarely affects the average author in a practical sense.

Copyright, as its name implies, means the right to copy, or to reproduce. To quote one authority*, "in its specific application it means the right to multiply copies of those products of the human brain known as literature and art." To these might be added music. To quote further: "Copyright may be defined as the sole and exclusive liberty of multiplying copies of an original work or composition, or in other words, the right of reproducing in a printed form. There is but one copyright in a literary work, and that one copyright covers all serial, book, dramatic, cinematographic or other rights of every kind."

* "Copyright Condensed and Explained," by Lewis C. Russell (Jarrolds 1s. 6d.).

The importance of retaining the copyright will therefore be readily seen. It is not necessary to part with the copyright in order to produce a work in book or any other form, as the author has the power to grant a licence to publish, and such licence can, as we have seen, readily be defined and limited under the terms of the contract.

Copyright is liable to affect an author in two ways. He may commit a breach of copyright himself by infringing someone else's rights; or someone may infringe his. The former is in a sense more immediately important. In the event of anyone infringing an author's copyright, his only remedy is a legal one, so that beyond placing the facts of the case in a solicitor's hands, he can do little more than act on legal advice. But it is very important that he should not unwittingly commit any technical offence himself.

I use the word "unwittingly," because it is obvious that the deliberate plagiarist is not likely to be influenced by any word of warning. He is probably aware of the risk he is taking, and is presumably ready to pay the penalty if discovered.

The most important elementary distinction which must be drawn is that there is no copyright in *facts*, but that there is copyright in the method of their presentation. If a racehorse is a bay gelding standing sixteen hands high, aged five years, winner of certain races, anybody is at perfect liberty to make these statements in print. But it is not permissible to copy word for word the stylish description another writer may have indulged in. This would be infringing his copyright.

In the case of fiction or any work of imagination, copyright exists in the *expression* of an idea (though strictly not in the idea itself) as well as in the author's style.

But you need not be afraid of unwittingly following in the tracks of another writer who has had the same inspiration, let us say, for the plot of a story. It is extremely unlikely that such duplication will be followed by any legal action, and, even if it were, it must be remembered that the aggrieved party, in order to establish his case, has to *prove* that you had previously read his story. There have been many astonishing coincidences of this kind, in which there cannot possibly have been any intentional plagiarism. In fiction particularly, when ideas for plots are so often based on happenings in real life, two or more writers following the same line of thought may easily arrive at more or less the same method of presentation.

Quotation from another's work, provided it is not of unreasonable length and that the source is duly acknowledged, is a recognised custom and would rarely be held to constitute a breach of copyright, but it is generally advisable to obtain permission beforehand from the owner of the copyright.

English copyright is governed at present by the Act of 1911, which gives the author (or the owner of the copyright) the power to publish in any way a particular work ; by printing in book form or in magazine or newspaper ; to convert a non-dramatic work into a dramatic work and vice versa ; to make records or rolls or whatever may be necessary to mechanical production of the work : in short, to " publish " the work in any way within the territory indicated in the Copyright Act, or such countries as have a reciprocal arrangement with Great Britain.

The period covered by our own Act is the author's life and fifty years afterwards (with a few exceptions), so it will be seen how very important it is that an author should not give up absolute control of his rights. The protection afforded in this way by the other countries

indicated is subject to the Copyright Laws in force in each particular country and copyright under the British Act becomes operative automatically for writers living in the Colonies.

The possession of certain rights, in literary property as in anything else, indicates that the possessor has power to defend those rights, and to demand compensation if those rights are infringed. To quote the Act of 1911 "Copyright in a work shall be deemed to be infringed by any person who, without the consent of the owner of the copyright, does anything the sole right to do which is by this Act conferred on the owner of the copyright; Provided"—and there follows a description of exceptions to this rule; such as reviewing, or newspaper summary, inclusion of a certain amount of material in books for schools, lectures, etc.

Since the Act was framed a new method of publication has sprung up, viz., broadcasting, and this is covered by the provision guarding against the reading or recitation in public by one person of any reasonable extract from any published work.

When the copyright in a work has been infringed in any way the owner of the copyright has certain clearly defined remedies, and it behoves such owner to take immediate steps to protect his rights as soon as possible after learning of any such infringement.

It is impossible to give more than a brief outline of an author's rights under this heading; in fact, it is probably unnecessary. All that the author need bother about in the first place is to look out for any unauthorised use of his works, and if he finds any to consult someone who can give him sound legal advice as to his position. There are many people qualified to give this advice, such as the Secretary of the Incorporated Society of Authors.

Of course, this does not mean that an author should not know something about the value of the work which he has created. On the contrary he would be well advised to become acquainted with the general principles of the Copyright Act, certainly before he ventures far on his literary career. The point is that unless he has a natural aptitude for such things, he would probably be more profitably employed in creative work than struggling to cope with the intricacies of a legal document upon which even experts hold varying views. Since this work is intended for the use of the beginner in literature as well as the experienced writer it would perhaps be as well to leave this point as it stands, for the longer one labours the position to the novice, the more confused he is likely to become.

The protection afforded by the Copyright Act of 1911 extends to most of the British Dominions and Colonies and, as indicated earlier in this chapter, such countries as have a reciprocal agreement with Great Britain. This arrangement covers most of the European countries and certain States in other parts of the world. The most notable exception, perhaps, is the United States of America, which country has its own Copyright Law at present, though this disability may shortly be abolished.

But for the moment let us keep to our own Act. In the first place, English copyright does not depend upon any formalities for its existence, but comes automatically into being with the creation of a particular work, be it short story, poem, novel, treatise, literary, musical or artistic work of any description. As far as literary works are concerned the formalities begin with the publication of the work. Prior to the present Act registration was necessary to protect the copyright of a work, but the 1911 Act has done away with that. What is necessary,

however, is that on publication the publisher must send a copy of the best edition to the British Museum, and that the University Libraries have the right to demand copies of the ordinary edition, and certain penalties are laid down for non-observance of the requirements. But the obligation is upon the publisher, so the author should be free of worry in this respect.

A special word of caution may not come amiss here to those authors who write for magazines or periodicals. The Act assigns to the author the copyright of anything that appears in any such publication—apart from such publication—unless a definite agreement is made conceding the copyright to the publisher or proprietor of the periodical. Therefore the author should carefully note what kind of receipt he is asked to sign in return for payment ; or he may find that he has unwittingly parted with all his rights in the work. This may seem a little point, but it precludes the author from publishing that particular piece of work anywhere else without the permission of the party to whom he has sold his rights. In the case of a serial story this may very well be a considerable loss to the author, and even short stories sometimes have an unexpected value in future years.

Second serial rights, film and dramatic rights (the former especially) are often potentially valuable. Therefore the author should pay careful attention to actual disposal of his work. For example, when submitting a short story to a magazine he should, in his accompanying letter, specifically offer "first British serial rights"—which is all the reasonable editor or proprietor expects to acquire. Some publications, taking advantage of the average author's complete ignorance on the subject, either offer to buy "all rights" in the story or, worse still, pay for it with a printed endorsement receipt (usually in small

type) on the back of the cheque, which reads something like this, "To copyright and all other authors' rights of and in——" (then the title of the story). Sometimes it pays an author, especially an absolute beginner, to grin and bear it—and sign. No magazine likes quarrelsome contributors, even when they are in the right. But the author should at any rate know what he is doing.

An Order in Council extends the provision of the Copyright Act of 1911 to American authors, as though they were British subjects, and under the same conditions.

The American Copyright Act of 1909 is on a rather different footing. The main feature is that works must be manufactured in the United States and registered at the Library of Congress, Washington. The term of copyright granted is 28 years, which can be renewed for a further period of similar length on the application of the author one year before the expiration of the first term.

English authors can get their books protected on the same terms, provided that publication in the two countries is "simultaneous." In order to allow for a little difficulty in getting the publication dates to synchronise, the American Law permits an author to deposit and register a copy of the English edition of a book within 60 days of first publication (it used to be 30 days) thereby securing interim copyright. The protection thus obtained is retrospective to the date of first day of publication, and extends for four months from the date of registration. It is advisable to lodge such a copy for interim copyright as early as possible, as no proceedings, in the event of piracy, can be taken until the book has been registered.

If the book is then set up and printed in America before the expiration of the four months' period copyright is obtained for 28 years—with the right of extension—and the book is as fully protected as is possible.

It is of interest to note that a new Copyright Bill is now under consideration in America which will go a long way towards equalising the positions of American and English authors. But there would be little use in giving it more than passing mention until it has been accepted as the law of the land, for the Bill that goes through without alteration is probably not yet drafted.

CHAPTER IX

PRODUCING AND MARKETING A BOOK

It is now necessary to describe briefly the process of publishing a book. Outside the publishing world itself, complete ignorance seems to prevail as to the procedure of book publication. An elementary explanation will therefore not be out of place, although many who read this book will be thoroughly familiar with publishing processes.

As soon as a book has been accepted the approximate date of publication is decided upon. This decision usually rests with the publisher, although the author's wishes are often consulted. The contract, as we have seen, usually provides for a six months' time limit.

The actual publication date is sometimes of considerable importance. When fewer books were produced the spring and the autumn were the recognised publishing seasons, but the disappearance of seasonal publication, although it is still adhered to by some of the older houses, is a sign of the times. The summer months, which used to be a close season for books, now see the production of many books of the first importance. Especially is this true of novels. Last year, for instance, novels by many well-known novelists were published during the summer.

This is commonsense as opposed to publishing

tradition, for probably as many if not more novels are read in the holiday months as at any other period of the year. But there is another sound reason for being published in the comparatively slack season. There is less competition. The fewer "latest novels" there are, the more selling opportunity there is for a new novel. There is, too, a minor practical consideration. When printers and binders are not so busy they can give more time and attention to the details of a book's production.

The production of a book begins when the manuscript is sent to the printers to be "set up." Most publishing firms have their regular printers; some, on account of the large number of books they produce, employ several printing firms. Some even have their own printing works.

When the printer receives the manuscript he usually furnishes the publisher with a detailed estimate of the costs of composition, machining, etc., which enables the publisher to check his own estimate. The manuscript goes to the composing room where, after the size of the page, margins, etc., has been decided, it is divided up among several compositors.

It is important that authors should realise what happens to their manuscript when it gets into the printers' hands. If a MS. has been bound up it has to be ripped open and divided into sections. It is, as we have noted already, a great convenience to the printer if a manuscript has a removable cover, or if the pages can be readily separated; and it is also desirable that the pages should be numbered consecutively throughout, and not chapter by chapter.

Thus different sections of the book are put into type simultaneously. The lines of type are placed by the

compositor into a shallow container called a galley, which holds about 15 in. to 20 in. of type, i.e., the equivalent of three or four printed pages. As the galleys are completed, proofs or "pulls" are taken. These proofs are known as "galley" or slip proofs. These are first corrected by the printers' readers, who check the proofs strictly by the "copy," or original manuscript.

It is customary for most publishers to send galley proofs (in duplicate) to the author. One set of proofs bears the printer's corrections and queries, and is stamped or labelled with the request that this set should receive the additional corrections of the author and be returned to the publisher as quickly as possible. The other set is for the author to keep for reference.

The corrections of the printers' reader should be copied by the author on the blank set of proofs, in addition to his own corrections. This will enable him to keep a record of the precise amount of corrections he has made, for it is customary for the publisher (as we have seen) to debit author's corrections in excess of a certain amount against the author's account. The errors made by the printers themselves are not of course included, but it is just as well, in case of dispute, for the author to preserve a record, which shows which were the printers' and which author's corrections.

If often happens that the printers' reader has occasion to "query" a point in the text. It may be an obvious slip, a misquotation, a fault of grammar or style, an omission or redundancy—in fact any point which strikes him as doubtful. His instructions are to check the proofs by the "copy" and if the "copy" is wrong he can only query it, which he does by inserting the letters "Qy." in the margin opposite the doubtful word or passage which he underlines. The author should take particular note

of these queries, which are often valuable, since they draw attention to points which the author himself may well have overlooked. Printers' readers are, as a class, very well read and intelligent, and their comments should receive careful attention. Some inexperienced authors are inclined to resent the queries of the proof-reader, but he is almost invariably right, and anyone who has had any association with 'readers cannot fail to appreciate the value of their queries. It is seldom that any doubtful point escapes them.

Whichever way a query is decided the author should be careful to mark it through clearly—usually with a tick, thus \checkmark —before returning the proofs. If this is not done the compositor is left without instructions when he has to work on the corrected proofs.

Young authors seemingly find it hard to understand that every correction they make after the letterpress has been set up in type *costs money*. Even the deletion of a letter or a word at the end of a paragraph takes up the compositor's time. And apparently simple corrections sometimes involve the resetting of a whole paragraph. To delete, for instance, a few words from a sentence in the middle of a long paragraph may involve the dislocation of every line of type in that paragraph, which means that every line has to be re-arranged.

The question of author's corrections is so important that, as we have seen, a clause in the contract provides that the author should bear the cost of excessive corrections. But, apart from the financial aspect, authors who indulge in too lavish corrections are a positive nuisance to the publisher. Heavy and unnecessary corrections probably spell delay and the publisher's schedule may be upset accordingly. Also, the author in such cases is apt to dispute the sum debited to his account in respect

of excessive corrections, and both publisher and printer may be put to a lot of trouble in satisfying the irate author that the charge is correct. Many unfortunate quarrels have arisen in this way, simply because authors are ignorant of the fact that corrections are expensive.

When the author returns his corrected proofs, the corrections are duly carried out in type. The procedure of different publishers naturally varies. Some embody their printers' readers corrections in type before proofs are submitted to the author. Other publishers do not send galley proofs at all, but wait till a later stage, when page proofs are available.

The type in the galleys is then measured off and separated into page form. The number of the page, the title of the book and the chapter headings are added, and each page of type is placed in what is known as a forme, into which the type is locked and once more proofs are taken. Sometimes, but not always, these proofs are submitted to the author. None but absolutely necessary corrections should be made at this stage, as the dislocation of a line or two may now compel the rearrangement of several pages.

Meanwhile, the wrapper, or "jacket" as it is called, is in process of manufacture. The commercial significance of the wrapper is fully realised by most publishers, but the suggested design is often submitted to the author, together with a copy of the descriptive matter which most wrappers contain. Very often the author is invited to supply a paragraph descriptive of his book, which can be used for this purpose. Publishers generally are anxious that the various details of book production should please the author, and as the wrapper is an important item the author's co-operation is frequently invited.

Illustrations have to be dealt with separately, the blocks

for these being made independently by the publisher's engraver, and sent to the printers for insertion in the text. The utmost care is necessary in handling illustrations, but the various points which have to be decided, e.g., the size of the different blocks, screen numbers, the system by which the printer is enabled to identify the blocks when they are placed in his hands—all these matters are almost invariably attended to by a department in the publisher's office, in whose hands the author can safely leave them.

The production of a book is largely a mechanical process. To the printer and blockmaker a book is so much metal, and measurements are the chief element in the actual manufacture of a book. The author should leave much to the discretion of his publisher who, in his turn, relies to a considerable extent on the judgment of the printer. There are all kinds of printers, of course, but at its best printing is as much of an art as a science, and fortunate is the author who is published by a firm which produces tasteful books.

An author may—very often does—prefer a certain style of binding, or wish for certain points to be observed in his book's production. If he knows exactly what he wants, and provided that his requirements are practicable, he should communicate them to the publisher who, as a rule, is glad to observe the author's wishes. But the author who has only a vague idea of what he wants should not interfere, for he will become unpopular.

A well-produced book is as satisfying to the discriminating eye as a shoddily made book is offensive. It takes a little more time and costs a little more to manufacture an attractive book, and perhaps the book-lover is inclined to magnify the importance of tasteful production; but, to consider the question from its reverse aspect, there is no excuse to-day for shoddy books. No

one expects the seven-and-sixpenny library novel to be a work of art, but, until recently, the general standard of English book production was depressingly low. Following the war-time period, when paper, cloth and good machinery were terribly scarce, the quality of book production fell to a very low level ; but to-day there are encouraging signs of improvement. Many English publishers have every reason to be proud of the high standard attained by their books. The houses of John Murray, Jonathan Cape, Heinemann, Chatto and Windus, Leonard Parsons, Harrap, John Lane, Geoffrey Bles, and others, are notable for the quality of their books. The most impressive example of the upward trend of book production is the Jay Library issued by Messrs. Jarrolds, which is an artistic triumph and demonstrates the practicability of producing a 7s. 6d. novel in irreproachable style.

The first step in the actual marketing of a book is the advance information supplied to the firm's travellers of its forthcoming publications. They are supplied with such details as will enable them to secure advance orders from the trade. The booksellers are usually canvassed a week or two before actual publication date, the travellers being supplied with special advance copies of the book and wrapper for the purpose. Very often the publisher will not give his actual printing order until he can tell roughly how many copies the trade will order in anticipation of publication. Copies of a book sold up to and including publication date are known as subscription sales.

Before actual publication date preliminary press advertisements are issued by most publishers and advance copies are sent to the leading papers for review. As the publisher likes to please the author if he can, the author's co-operation is sometimes sought, in the matter of review copies especially, although the ordinary contract stipulates

that all such details should be left to the publisher's discretion. And, usually, he is the better judge, as selling books happens to be his business. Press advertising and reviews are but means to an end from the publisher's point of view. And this brings us to an important point. What *does* sell books? Or, rather, what sells a book for which a demand has to be created?

At first sight the answer would appear to be simple. Most people not intimately connected with bookselling would probably say advertising. On more careful consideration they might add Press reviews and the activity of the publisher's salesmen. No one can deny that all of these are contributing factors. But all who are concerned in the publication of books know that the problem is much more profound and mystifying. A publisher may discover what he, his readers, and all who read the manuscript or proofs consider a "winner." It is well produced; the time of publication—always an important point—is carefully chosen; the book is well advertised in advance; the travellers are imbued with enthusiasm; the trade is diligently circularised; and the book is ushered into the world under conditions as favourable as human effort can make them. A generous advertising campaign is launched; the critics praise the book; it is well displayed in the windows of book shops—but, somehow or other, the reading public won't have it. It doesn't sell. The publisher may accelerate his efforts, spend more money advertising the book—all with negligible results.

On the other hand a book may be published with none of these advantages. It is unheralded in the publisher's advertisements, the reviewers ignore it, the trade often are unaware of its existence until the public begins to ask for it. The publisher, recording the growing demand with astonished satisfaction, realises he is entertaining an angel

unawares. If he is a good business man he at once begins an energetic sales campaign and promptly invests in advertising; for "invest" is the right word to use. Bewildering? Of course it is. But it is constantly happening.

No one can tell how a book is going to sell. In the case of established authors, whose loyal public may be safely estimated to within a few thousands, there is not, of course, the same uncertainty. A book by an unknown author is, however, always a gamble. The fascination of publishing, lies, of course, in this huge element of chance. That is, I think, why so many bad books are published; the publishers will back loser after loser in the hope of one day spotting a real winner.

Books, like plays, are very uncertain quantities until their public appearance. Their success, from a sales point of view is not; however, to be measured by their quality. Good books don't sell; bad books do, and very often. Public taste is absolutely mystifying. No one can pre-judge it. If there were anybody who could accurately forecast the fate of any manuscript he would be literally worth a fortune to any publisher. How can one individual determine the potential selling ability of a novel, for instance, when there are as many different grades of novels as there are readers? Who can say with absolute confidence what is going to appeal to even one section of the reading public?

It is tremendously difficult to judge the prospects of a story in manuscript. (Books of general or serious interest are obviously easier to assess and publishers rarely make mistakes with non-fiction books.) There is a host of classic "rejections" that afterwards turned out to be "best sellers."

"Paddy The Next Best Thing," "Tarzan of the

Apes," "Simon Called Peter," "The Sheik"—all these and many other big successes among modern novels were rejected by many publishers before they were finally accepted. For three years Maeterlinck's "Blue Bird" is reported to have gone the rounds. That great money-spinner, "Charley's Aunt," was rejected by nearly every manager in London. Rossini told Jenny Lind she would never be a singer; Sullivan didn't think Melba's voice good enough for the Savoy; Tree rejected "Peter Pan." No one really knows what the public wants. Experience fails to teach us, and intuition is more often wrong than right.

Every publisher makes mistakes of this kind but when he lets a book slip through his hands, only to see it prove a big commercial or artistic success in the hands of another publisher, it does not necessarily follow that there must be wailing and gnashing of teeth in the office. Admittedly, very few like to see their rival in business prosper by their own errors of judgment, but there is something to be said for the point of view of the publisher who recently wrote :

When anyone tells me of a masterpiece which we have rejected, I refuse to shed tears, for I always think that the book trade would be healthier if we publishers repented more for the rubbish that we so constantly publish, rather than for the gems of literature which the best of us occasionally reject.

Apart from the speculative aspect of publishing books, every author should know something of the procedure of publication and of the conditions which govern the selling of books. Although the publisher is in a sense his business partner, the author rarely knows anything about the publisher's job. So many authors regard publishers as a

mysterious race, whose ways are beyond comprehension, that it is high time some light was usefully shed on the status, functions, and limitations of publishers generally.

It is unnecessary to emphasise the risks attached to publishing (I refer to the publication of books of general interest and fiction, especially the latter). Some publishers have more judgment, or flair, than others, and prosper accordingly ; but the element of chance inseparable from trying to satisfy the public taste makes publishing a more than ordinarily hazardous occupation. There is much less risk—and incidentally much more profit—in publishing educational and technical books, but for the purpose of this brief survey, we have been considering the “general” publisher.

The price of books is a subject of interest and importance to every author. The published price of a book directly affects both its sales and the author's royalty.

“The published price” (of the ordinary run of new books) says Mr. Stanley Unwin,* “can be divided into three more or less equal parts, viz. :

1. The actual cost of manufacturing, i.e., paper, printing, and binding.
2. The cost of distribution, i.e., booksellers' discounts and travellers' commissions.
3. The balance, which has to cover :
 - (a) Advertising ;
 - (b) The Author's remuneration ;
 - (c) The Publisher's working expenses ;
 - (d) The Publisher's profit.”

Roughly speaking, it costs between two and three times as much to manufacture a book to-day as it did

* In his illuminating pamphlet “The Price of Books” (George Allen and Unwin, 6d.).

before 1914. Printing, paper and binding costs have all increased considerably. The cost of distribution has also advanced, the minimum discount demanded by the bookseller now averaging $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. Advertising is more expensive than ever. The author's royalty is calculated on the published price—an important point. To quote Mr. Unwin further, "The publisher's working expenses are extraordinarily high. It is not that publishers' businesses are extravagantly run; most of them, I believe, are fairly economically run; because at best the turnover is small compared with any staple commodity such as tea, *and the detailed work involved is out of all proportion.*" (The italics are mine.)

Yet, in spite of increased costs all round, the published price of the novel has not advanced in proportion. Before the war the 6s. novel was obtainable at the net retail price of 4s. 6d.; to-day the standard net price is 7s. 6d., an increase of only about 66 per cent. Publishers are actually working on a smaller margin of profit. If any author doubts the statement, I refer him to Mr. Stanley Unwin's figures, which leave no room for doubt.

The following detailed estimates for the production of some different types of book will probably be of interest.

Date....								
Title	7s. 6d. Novel.							
No. Printed	Pages—Letterpress 288							
2,000								
Composition	..	..	..	..	£	s.	d.	
					58	0	0	
Corrections	..	..	..	..	8	0	0	
Machining Text	..	..	..	..	23	0	0	
„	Colour Illustrations							
„	Half-tone Illustrations							
„	Frontispiece							
Carried forward					£89	0	0	

					£	s.	d.
<i>Brought forward</i>	..	..	..	..	89	0	0
Paper—Text	..	..	..	..	23	5	0
„ Illustrations							
„ Frontispiece							
Cover Design							
„ Blocks	..	..	..	..	1	0	0
Moulds	..	..	..	..	13	0	0
Stereos							
Electrotypes							
Jacket							
Artist	..	..	..	..	5	5	0
Blocks	..	..	..	..	8	0	0
Paper	..	..	..	..	1	17	0
Composition and Machining				..	6	0	0
Various							
					<hr/> £147 7 0 <hr/>		

Published price 7s. 6d.

Average selling price 4s. 9d.

Cost per Copy	..	..	..	1	5½
O/H	..	..	..	1	1½
Binding	..	..	..		7
Folding and Gathering	..	..	
Royalty (say 10 per cent)	..	..			9
				<hr/> 3 11½ <hr/>	

From the above estimate it will be seen that *on the first edition and provided every copy is sold*, the publisher's profit is the difference between 4s. 9d. (the average selling price to the trade) and 3s. 11½d., viz., 9¾d. But out of this 9¾d. the publisher has to pay for the advertising of the book. £50, which works out at 1s. a copy, is a modest sum to spend and many publishers exceed it, so that they would actually *lose money* on the first edition. For subsequent editions the figures are radically different—there is no £58 to pay for composition, for instance—and the publisher may look forward to a reasonable profit.

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In the above estimate, the publisher may actually lose money on Colonial sales and his only hope of recouping himself lies in reprinting to supply a further demand.

Here are another publisher's figures.

7s. 6d. Novel, Cr. 8vo, 288 pp. Edition of 2,000 copies					£	s.	d.
Composing, per 32 pp. £7	..	..	..	..	63	0	0
Corrections	..	..	..	..	8	0	0
Machining	..	..	..	..	21	12	0
Paper, 70 lbs.	..	..	..	..	19	13	0
Binding	..	..	..	..	54	3	4
Binding Brasses	..	..	..	..	1	0	0
Jacket							
Artist	..	..	..	..	5	5	0
Blocks	..	..	..	..	12	0	0
Paper	..	..	..	..	1	10	0
Machining	..	..	..	..	6	5	0
	..	..	..	..	£192	8	4

(Advertising charges not allowed for)

Thus the actual manufacturing cost works out at just over 1s. 11d. a copy, to which must be added :

Overhead charges, minimum, say,	1/- per copy
Authors's royalty (say 10 per cent)	9d. „ „
	<hr/>
	1/9d. „ „

which brings the cost per copy to over 3s. 8d. Allowing 1s. a copy for advertising, the total is 4s. 8d. And the publisher has to supply the bulk of the trade at about 4s. 9d. Thus, *provided he sells every copy of this edition of 2,000*, he makes a profit of about 1d. a copy, compared with the author's 9d. But on subsequent editions (if any) the balance restores itself.

What are the average sales of a novel ? Sales are an

unknown quantity to most commencing authors, and some approximate figures may be of interest. For a first novel, anything over 1,500 copies sold of the 7s. 6d. edition may be considered successful. An averagely successful novel sells from about two to three thousand copies. The sales of many novels do not exceed 1,000 copies, and a considerable number sell no more than a few hundred copies. The sales of established novelists vary from two to as many as fifty thousand. Anything from 5,000 to 10,000 copies may be regarded as a substantial success; and over 10,000 as an outstanding success. From thirty thousand onwards we are in the region of the "best-seller."

Publishers often incur an actual loss on the 7s. 6d. edition of a novel, but the publication of cheaper editions, in the case of books suitable for the cheap edition market, provides a good opportunity to convert loss into profit. On 3s. 6d., 2s. 6d., and 2s. editions the margin of profit is usually greater because there is no heavy initial manufacturing cost to be borne. Cheap editions are usually printed from standing type, thus saving the heavy initial cost of composition. But certain types of novel are being issued, in increasing numbers, be it noted, at 3s. 6d. instead of 7s. 6d. in the first instance. Here are some actual production figures:

Date						
Title	3s. 6d. net					
No. Printed				Pages—Letterpress	256	
5,000					£	s. d.
Composition	..	..	..	..	48	0 0
Corrections	..	..	..	..	6	0 0
Machining Text	..	..	..	..	34	0 0
„	Colour Illustrations					
„	Half-tone Illustrations					
„	Frontispiece					

Carried forward £88 0 0

					£	s.	d.
<i>Brought forward</i>	..	..	..	..	88	0	0
Paper—Text	..	..	..	..	53	2	6
„ Illustrations							
„ Frontispiece							
Cover Design							
„ Blocks	..	..	..	..	1	2	9
Moulds	...	..	..	..	12	0	0
Stereos							
Electrotypes							
Jacket							
Artist	..	..	..	..	8	8	0
Blocks	..	..	..	..	7	10	0
Paper	..	..	..	..	9	0	0
Composition and Machining							
Various							

					£182	11	0
Cost per Copy				8 $\frac{1}{2}$
O/H			6 $\frac{1}{2}$
Binding			6 $\frac{3}{4}$
Folding and Gathering							
Royalty (say 10 per cent)					4 $\frac{1}{2}$
							2s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

Published price 3s. 6d.

Average selling price 2s. 3d.

In this instance, of course, the cost of composition has to be allowed for. Including the author's ten per cent royalty, the cost per copy of a first edition of 5,000 works out at 2s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and the average selling price at 2s. 3d. It must be noted that a special jacket design was commissioned for this particular book.

Here are specimen production figures for a non-fiction book :

18s. Large Demy 8vo. 320 pp. 16 illustrations 1,500 copies.

	£	s.	d.
Composing 320 pp. £9 10s. per 32 pp. ..	95	0	0
Corrections	10	0	0
Machining 1,500 copies	26	0	0
Paper for text, 37 × 49, 155 lbs. ..	27	0	0
16½ tone blocks at 25s. each	20	0	0
Paper for illustrations	8	5	0
Machining illustrations	9	10	0
Binding 1,500 copies at 1s. 1d. ..	81	5	0
Binding Blocks	1	10	0
Jacket	5	5	0
	<hr/> £283 15 0 <hr/>		

To this total has to be added the royalty payable to the author, which may be anything from 10 to 20 per cent. Fifteen per cent is an average commencing royalty for a book of this type. The publisher usually allots about £100 for advertising, and this important item has also to be taken into consideration.

Authors of a mathematical turn of mind can readily satisfy themselves from the various figures I have quoted that the publisher's expectation of profit, in the case of most of the books on their list, is at best only very moderate.

To understand the marketing of books an author needs to know something of the library system. The Big Four of the bookworld are Messrs. W. H. Smith and Sons, Messrs. Boots, Mudie's and *The Times Book Club*. In this country at any rate—in America the lending library is a comparatively unknown institution—people are accustomed to borrowing books, especially novels. "No Briton buys a book that he can borrow." The public which actually *buys* novels is, in point of numbers, negligible. When one reflects that there are forty odd million people in this country, out of which number surely at least half a million would enjoy

a novel of some sort, and that a novel which is widely reviewed and discussed and generally regarded as a "success," perhaps sells—with luck—5,000 copies in all, the fact is brought home.

It is not my intention to discuss the merits and demerits of the library system, except from the author's point of view, and then only because a certain aspect of the situation is apt to be overlooked. At first sight it would appear that the libraries, by lending books to the public for a subscription which works out at a few pence a volume, prevent or at least diminish the sale of books. But what would happen if there were no libraries? Would the reading public buy the books it now borrows? I think not. The output of publishers would suddenly dwindle to insignificant proportions. There would be no market for at least 75 per cent of the novels which are now published. Whether that would be a good thing or not is not for me to say. The point is that the libraries can afford to lay in stocks of new fiction to meet the voracious demands of their subscribers—and no one reads books so quickly as the lending library subscriber—and the publishers in their turn can only afford to publish many of their books because they are assured of a certain sale to the libraries.

With books of general interest, the proportion of buyers to borrowers is certainly much higher, but one result of the library system has been to raise the prices of general books, and this has attracted to the libraries the people who cannot afford to pay big prices for books. And there are many books published which many people want to read and only a few would ever think of buying. The lending library system brings these books within their reach and makes it possible for the publisher to undertake their publication.

The young author who inveighs against the lending libraries forgets that were it not for their existence he would probably never have been published at all. To take a broader view, the libraries are undoubtedly responsible, although indirectly, for many of the mediocre books, especially novels, published nowadays.

Novels are occasionally published at 6s., or even 5s., but 7s. 6d. is the standard price to-day, and with costs likely to remain at their present high level, there is little likelihood of any reduction. Not that 7s. 6d. is an excessive price to pay for a good new novel. Yet people who will cheerfully spend thirty shillings on a bottle of champagne, twenty-five shillings on a couple of theatre stalls, or five shillings for a cigar, would be horrified at the extravagance of spending 7s. 6d. on a novel.

The fault lies with the public, but the remedy lies with the publishers, booksellers and authors, and all who have the welfare of books at heart. The public needs educating. It would be a mistake to try and eliminate the borrowing habit—better borrow books than not read at all. And the borrower of to-day may be the buyer of to-morrow. No, the book-buying habit has to be inculcated. The pleasure and advantage of books, as compared with other forms of entertainment, must be emphasised. Movements are already on foot to increase the public's interest in books and to develop the habit of book-buying.

Authors, who are so directly affected, should certainly not hesitate to put their shoulders to the wheel. Propaganda, verbal and written, goes a very long way.

CHAPTER X

FILM, DRAMATIC, SERIAL AND OTHER RIGHTS

AUTHORS who have not had first hand experience of the film business are usually inclined to believe that it is not only delightfully easy to write or adapt their work for the screen, but that it readily yields enormous sums of money. Mention film rights to the inexperienced author and his eye lights up at once. This optimistic attitude is not justified by the facts.

The film industry is only just beginning to emerge from the critical stage which followed the early period, when it was regarded as something like an infant prodigy. It grew overnight, almost literally; and its commercial possibilities were so immediately manifest that many speculators and adventurers were attracted to this new field. The "boom" days, when everything, including prices, was experimental, gave way, as they were bound to do, to a discouraging slump; and the new industry is at the present time settling down. Better films are being produced; the unhealthy American monopoly is disappearing with the entrance into the field of German, Austrian and Scandinavian producers, and the welcome revival of the British industry, which has all along struggled against grave disadvantages.

Although there are no huge fortunes ready to fall into the lap of the author, film rights are (relatively) extremely

valuable. But it must be clearly understood that the requirements of producers exclude all but a small proportion of stories. Enthusiastic amateur aspirants will spare themselves a lot of disappointment if they will only recognise the fact that the film specialist alone can judge whether a story is suitable for the screen. Even the established novelist is often incapable of judging which of his novels, if any, is acceptable from the film point of view.

Without attempting to give any comprehensive survey of the requirements of the photoplay market, it is still possible to indicate something of the policy and methods of film companies. In the first place, a distinction must be drawn between the original idea, whether it takes the form of a scenario or synopsis, and the published story which is adaptable for film purposes.

At once it must be stated that producers buy very little "outside" stuff. Once in a while a film company will invite the submission of original ideas, with the almost invariable stipulation that they take the form of synopses. Outside the trade only a very few people have any appreciation of even the elementary requirements of film technique, and every company has its own staff of scenario writers and editors. Scenario writing is emphatically the province of the professional. Producers don't want original scenarios from unknown writers. In the case of a well-known author whose work reveals pronounced film qualities, it often happens that he finds himself commissioned by a company to write stories for production, but it is useless under present conditions for the amateur to approach firms or producers with original scripts.

The practice also has its dangers. Although no reputable firm would steal an idea from an outside contributor, there are still a number of quite unscrupulous people

in the film business who would not hesitate—reluctant as one is to state the fact—to make use of unsolicited ideas without acknowledging their source. Copyright exists in the writer's work, it is true, but it is an exceedingly difficult thing to establish one's claim in the event of a plot or a situation being "lifted" in this way. With a published story it is a very different matter.

The majority of stories which are filmed are published either in book or serial form beforehand. Producers much prefer to consider a published novel, or short story. In fact, many of them will not look at manuscripts at all.

Some firms, it is true, prefer to consider a published story in synopsis form. This is only a preliminary step, as, if they are interested, they will certainly want to read the complete story subsequently; but it saves a good deal of time, as it is nearly always possible to judge from the synopsis whether a story has screen possibilities or not. The synopsis of an ordinary novel should consist of about 500 to 1,000 words, not longer, and should cover the action of the story, stressing its dramatic scenes, if possible. For film purposes a story is usually divided up into five "reels," and if the story lends itself to summary in five sections, with a good dramatic crisis in each, it is not a bad plan to draft the synopsis in this way. One advantage from the author's point of view in approaching firms with a synopsis in the first instance is that it is less expensive to send around a two-page synopsis than a copy of the book, and if there is any delay or difficulty in recovering it he does not stand to lose the book. It is advisable to keep a copy of a synopsis, as one or two of the film companies are inclined to be careless with unsolicited material. In the case of a short story, a synopsis is of course quite unnecessary; the published story should be submitted,

A full length film is often made from a magazine story, particularly in America. Indeed, in many ways the short story lends itself better to film adaptation than the novel. Occasionally a short story is purchased with the intention of making a two-reeler out of it, in which case the price paid is considerably less than for a full-length film.

From the printed story, whether it be novel or short story, the producer can judge whether it has film possibilities, and on this basis they make their offer for the film rights. They then turn the story over to their own experts for conversion into a film. Incidentally, one may remark that as a result of their labours, the bewildered author is frequently unable to trace more than a faint resemblance to the original. Indeed, the story goes that a well-known American writer, invited to witness the trade show of the film version of one of his novels, was unable to identify more than the name of one of his minor characters. Watching the film, he had an inspiration for another story, suggested by one of the situations, sat down and wrote it, and eventually submitted it to the very same film company, who promptly bought the rights.

The demand for new stories for the films is widespread, and, if anything, is increasing. Producers are always on the look out for good filmable stories, and spend considerable time and money in reading the material submitted to them. The individual requirements of the various companies are, in a sense, less ascertainable than the needs, say, of a fiction magazine, of which the contents furnish a regular clue to the outside contributor. Those who study the productions of different companies will obtain an idea of what kind of story is required by each; but perhaps the best indication is the personalities of the "stars" who are regularly featured in the same company's films, as the present tendency is undoubtedly to decide in

favour of the story which will provide suitable parts for their own leading actors and actresses. Certain stories, for instance, would fall into the category of "Betty Balfour" stories, and would be quite inappropriate for a different type of screen actress.

Many good stories are quite unsuitable for filming. There are certain prejudices in the film trade which vary from time to time. With one or two notable exceptions there is, for instance, at the present time a bias against costume pictures, and an objection to stories which involve the "doubling" of two parts by the same actor. Apart from such temporary disadvantages, many stories, which at first sight may appear eminently filmable, will be found to make no appeal to producers.

The producer always has his eye on the public. And the film public is something very hard to define. Millions of people go to the pictures, and their numbers include many widely differing types. Rich and poor, educated and uneducated, their taste is as varied as their outlook on life. In this respect the present-day cinema differs from the theatre. Certain theatres have the reputation for a particular type of play, and different grades of theatres exist in order to cater for different tastes. The Lyceum audience is something entirely different from the St. James's. A development of the future may well be a similar distinction between one cinema and another. Meanwhile, the producer has to cater for a very catholic public, and not every writer can solve the problem for him.

The mechanical side of the business imposes many restrictions on the producer's decision, and objections arising in this respect may not be at all evident to the author. Producing is expensive, and pictures which require an enormous cast, vast spectacles, trick photography, "stunts," double exposures and so on, may be

rejected on the score of impracticability or expense. Many stories cannot be picturised without overloading the film with explanatory captions. All these technicalities are often a closed book to the author.

The trade papers provide much useful information and should be carefully studied by the writer who has one eye on film rights when writing his novel or story. The activities of the various companies can be noted ; trade reviews of films provide valuable indication of the type of story produced by each ; articles will shed light on technical requirements ; the personalities of different " stars " can be usefully studied.

But, generally speaking, the field is too wide and out of reach for the average author to be able to make a comprehensive study of its requirements. His best policy is to place his work in the hands of a competent agent who is in close touch with the market. The leading literary agencies have a film department both in New York and London and are better able to dispose of film rights than the author himself.

What are film rights worth ? The answer to this question depends on other considerations. First, although not by any means most important, the story itself ; the company which wants to buy the rights (perhaps the most important consideration of all) ; the standing of the author and the publicity value of the author's name or of the story itself ; sometimes the cost of production. Many good stories are bought by British firms for £100, or even £50, but this is the minimum figure. The average price for an ordinary " five-reeler " where the author is not very well known is about £200 in this country. In America prices run higher, \$2,000 being a common figure. As much as £5,000 was paid recently by an English company but that is an uncommonly big figure

here. In America, \$50,000 is by no means a top price.

The film rights are leased for a number of years to the producing company, at the expiration of which period they revert to the owner of the copyright, usually the author. Royalties are sometimes paid, but only to prominent authors, and then very rarely. In any case, the royalty basis, at any rate under present conditions, works out very unsatisfactorily in practice, although it sounds better theoretically.

The market for film rights is very well worth cultivation but it is difficult to cultivate. I doubt whether anything but some years of practical experience will enable the author to understand and appreciate the requirements as well as the limitations of the business. However, it is so profitable a field that an author is justified in attempting closer acquaintanceship with its technicalities. I know several authors whose work has been a big success in films, but whose stories have failed surprisingly in book form—another indication of the essential difference between films and fiction. This note of warning has to be sounded, if only to counteract the general impression among authors that their work is capable of being successfully filmed. The point is that the author usually can't tell; and failing first hand knowledge of the business, he should leave the decision to others more expert. In any case, business arrangements, in the fortunate event of his work satisfying the demands of producers, should be entrusted to a good agent.

* * * * *

Somebody once said that at some time or other in his life every man has the ambition to write a play. "And nearly all of them write it," said a cynic to me recently.

Perhaps he was justified in his bitterness, for he had spent several weeks in wading through an incredibly large number of entries for a play competition, only to find that the percentage of plays which were *worth consideration* worked out at less than one per cent.

Writing a play has an attraction which is easy to understand. It looks easy; from the actual writing point of view much less formidable than a novel. To be a dramatist seems to be on a higher plane somehow than to be a mere novelist. The sensation of power which the aspiring dramatist anticipates probably captures his imagination; it must be wonderful (he thinks) to set in motion the intricate mechanism of the theatre, to put his own words into the mouths of distinguished actors and actresses. The glamour surrounding the theatre still exists for those who are innocent of its ways. And, finally, it is generally believed that a successful play will make the fortune of the author.

It is a delightful prospect. As a result of this general conception of the rôle of the dramatist, and in all ignorance of the heart-breaking disappointments and complete disillusionment which await ninety-nine out of every hundred budding playwrights, men and women of all ages and temperaments, and in every conceivable situation in life, cheerfully set about writing a play, in the optimistic expectation that it has only to be brought before a manager with sufficient insight and artistic appreciation to make their fame and fortune overnight.

Alas, poor Yorick! The art of the playwright is a gift rarely bestowed. It is infinitely more difficult to write a good play than a good novel, or even a good short story. It is equally difficult to write a commercial play. It is also difficult to judge a play. Negatively, one can say that a play fails for certain reasons, but the *flair* for

detecting a potentially successful play is almost as rare as the ability to write one.

From time to time we hear managerial laments of the scarcity of good plays and of new playwrights of promise. And here we are confronted with a curious paradox. On the one hand, managers openly appeal for new plays of merit, and on the other we have an almost cynical discouragement of new talent. Probably because they are so disheartened by the quantity of appallingly poor efforts which come to their desks, managers view a new play by an unknown writer with indifference and an air of gloomy resignation, which is fatal to the chances of any play not of outstanding merit.

Theatrical production is a gamble on a very expensive scale. The production of a West End play costs about £5,000, and few managers can afford to experiment. This directly militates against the unknown author. Producers who thus play for safety by producing the mediocre work of established playwrights, in preference to experimenting with the effort of an unknown author, are not always to be blamed for their attitude. Few plays make any money; it is estimated that only about 15 per cent show any substantial profit. As soon as a new play, courageously produced by one of the repertory companies—to which I shall refer later—shows signs of being a success, managers fall head over heels in their anxiety to acquire the production rights.

Many a really good play has doubtless lost all chance of production, partly through the genuine difficulty in discerning dramatic merit, and also through the indifference of managers, which, in its turn, is due to the avalanche of woefully poor material with which other beginners steadily bombard them. Perhaps it is going too far to suggest that managers have given up all hope of discovering new talent,

but, compared at any rate with journalism and publishing, there is a conspicuous lack of enthusiasm. Some managers even refuse to read unsolicited manuscripts.

In spite of these discouraging conditions, and even admitting that writing a good play is a very difficult achievement, the "urge" is so strong that people will still go on writing plays; and although it does not fall within the scope of this book to attempt any instruction in the art of playwriting (though, to quote Mr. William Archer, "There are no rules for writing plays") something must be said about the requirements of a successful play and the conditions under which plays are accepted and produced.

Without inborn dramatic instinct no one can hope to write a good play. (Unfortunately, it is hopeless to try and convince *anyone* who writes a play that he or she may *not* possess this essential qualification.) It is true that most of us have some fundamental dramatic instinct, and there is no doubt that it can be fostered and developed by constant playgoing.

It is also true that no one can hope to write a successful play without some knowledge or appreciation of the mechanical limitations of stage production. Too many characters will deprive a play of any commercial chance it may possess. A big cast is expensive, as is elaborate scenery, and neither is likely to appeal to a manager. By constantly going to see plays performed, the would-be playwright can learn a great deal.

Of all technical points which may thus be noted, perhaps the most valuable is the study of exits and entrances. By observing how the practised dramatist brings his characters on and takes them off the stage, much amateurishness may be avoided. The relative effective-

ness of "curtains" may be also studied, and many other important points of craftsmanship.

There are four ways of submitting a play: (1) to a manager direct; (2) to a leading actor or actress in the hope that a part in the play may appeal to them so strongly that they will bring pressure to bear on a manager in order to play the part; (3) to send it to a play-producing society or repertory company; (4) to employ an agent.

The first method has been touched upon already. The second is not a bad plan, if the playwright is acquainted with actors and actresses of sufficient standing; many plays have been accepted in this way. The third method brings us to the repertory company, about which a word must be said.

The development of the play-producing society is a welcome sign. These are societies formed with the idea of encouraging and fostering new dramatic talent. They will often undertake the production of plays unlikely to appeal to a commercial management, but it is significant that their Sunday presentations are watched with keen interest by West End managers. In fact, many of the biggest successes of recent years were first produced by one or other of the repertory companies. "The Vortex," "Abraham Lincoln," "At Mrs. Beam's," "Havoc," and "Within Four Walls" were all originally produced in this way.

Before going on to deal with the fourth way of submitting a play, viz., through an agent, let us examine briefly the conditions under which plays are usually accepted. The customary arrangement is on a royalty basis, with an advance payment in anticipation of royalties, the royalty consisting of a percentage of box-office receipts. The actual percentage varies with the standing of the author.

A clause of considerable importance to the author,

which on that account should never be omitted from any dramatic contract, provides for the production of the play within a certain time, usually twelve months from the date of the contract. If the manager fails to produce the play within the specified time the rights revert to the author. This prevents an unscrupulous manager from bottling up a play which he himself has no intention of producing but which he is anxious to keep out of the hands of his rivals.

It is also customary for the producer to undertake to present the play for a certain period each year following the first performance, and in the event of his failing to do so, the rights revert to the author.

Plays should never be sold outright. In one of his novels, Leonard Merrick, who writes with a real knowledge of the stage of that period, describes the enormous commercial success of a play which the young author was induced to sell for the handsome outright payment of ten pounds. Things are not so bad as that to-day, but there are still many unscrupulous people in the lower grades of the theatrical profession who would not hesitate to take advantage of an author's ignorance.

I reproduce a specimen dramatic contract for a first play by an author whose previous success had been confined to fiction :

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT made and entered
this day of 19 between AND
 care of of
 (hereinafter called the Author) of the one
part AND whose registered offices are
the (hereinafter called the Managers) of the
other part concerning a play by the Author entitled

hereinafter called the said play

WHEREBY IT IS MUTUALLY AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

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1. In consideration of the agreements on the part of the Managers hereinafter mentioned the Author hereby grants to the Managers the sole and exclusive license to perform the said play in the English language throughout the British Empire (except Canada) for so long as five years from the date of the signing of this agreement provided that the stipulations herein provided for are complied with.
2. The Managers shall pay upon the signing and execution of this agreement the sum of One hundred pounds (£100) without which payment this agreement shall not be valid which sum shall be in advance and on account of the royalties hereinafter provided for but shall not be returnable in any event whatsoever.
3. The Managers shall produce the said play in a first-class manner in a first-class theatre in the West End of London within one year of the signing of this agreement. If the Managers shall not have produced the said play as herein provided for within one year of the signing of this agreement they shall have the right to postpone the production for a further six months upon payment of a further sum of fifty pounds (£50) also in advance of royalties and not returnable. If the Managers shall not have produced the said play as herein provided for within eighteen months of the signing of this agreement then all rights and licenses herein granted shall revert to the Author and this agreement shall become null and void.
4. The Managers shall pay to the Author royalties on the gross receipts from the sale of seats and admission to any theatre or place of entertainment where the said play shall be played at the rates following, less entertainment tax and library commissions if any :
 - On the gross weekly receipts up to one thousand pounds five per cent.....5 %
 - On the gross weekly receipts in excess of one thousand pounds and not exceeding fourteen hundred pounds seven and one half per cent..... 7½%
 - On the gross receipts in excess of fourteen hundred pounds ten per cent.....10%
5. In the event of the Managers duly producing the said

play in the West End of London as herein provided for they shall have for a period of four weeks after the first London production an option to secure upon payment of two hundred pounds (£200) in advance and on account of royalties which shall become payable in America and Canada, but not returnable in any event whatever, the sole and exclusive license to perform the said play in the English language throughout the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada for a period of five years from the first performance of the play in the United States or Canada, provided that the conditions of this agreement are complied with.

6. In the event of the Managers duly exercising their option on the performing rights in the United States of America and Canada they shall produce or cause to be produced the said play in New York, Boston, Chicago, or Philadelphia within one year of exercising their option on the American rights or shall forfeit all right and license in and to the said play in the United States and Canada.
7. In the event of the Managers exercising their option on the American and Canadian performing rights in the said play and duly producing the said play as herein provided for they shall pay to the Author royalties on the gross receipts from the sale of seats and admission to any theatre or place of entertainment where the said play shall be played at the rates following, less entertainment tax :

On the gross weekly receipts up to five thousand dollars five per cent..... 5%

On the gross receipts in excess of five thousand dollars and not exceeding seven thousand dollars seven and one half per cent..... 7½%

On the gross weekly receipts in excess of seven thousand dollars ten per cent..... 10%

except that these terms shall not apply to the so-called stock and repertory performances the terms for which are herein-after provided for.

8. The Managers shall pay to the Author one half of all sums paid by American and Canadian stock and repertory companies. They shall use their best endeavours to get the highest terms from such stock and repertory companies,

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- and shall pay to the Author his share of all proceeds as and when received by the Managers.
9. The Managers shall pay to the Author if they shall sublet the Colonial (except Canadian) rights two thirds of all sums received by them from the sale or lease of the Colonial rights, whether such sums be royalties, advances on royalties fees premiums or indemnities. If the Managers shall produce the play under their own management in the Colonies (except Canada) they shall pay to the Author the fees and royalties herein provided for the British Empire.
 10. The Managers shall furnish to the Author certified nightly returns and accounts of the takings of the said play and shall forward these together with a statement of the gross weekly receipts and all sums that shall be shown to be due to the Author not later than Friday following any week in which any performance of the play shall have been given. The Managers shall give to the Author or his duly appointed representatives access at all reasonable times to all books papers vouchers and other documents necessary to verify such accounts.
 11. The Managers shall not make nor permit to be made any serious alteration in the text of the said play without the consent of the Author which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld.
 12. The Managers shall announce on all programmes posters and other advertising matter connected with the said play the name of
as Author of the said play.
 13. Notwithstanding anything in this agreement to the contrary the Author reserves to himself all film rights in and to the said play but undertakes that no film version of the play shall be shown with his consent in the British Empire (except Canada) within eighteen months of the first performance of the play under this contract, and if the Managers shall exercise their option on the American and Canadian rights no film version shall be shown within the territory of the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada with his consent prior to eighteen months from the first performance of the play in the United States of America or Dominion of Canada.

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14. Notwithstanding anything in this agreement to the contrary the Author reserves to himself all amateur rights in and to the said play but undertakes that no amateur rights shall be given with his consent in the British Empire (except Canada) for eighteen months from the end of the first London run of the said play, and in America and Canada, (if the Managers shall exercise their option and duly produce the play in this territory) for eighteen months from the end of the first run of the play in America or Canada.
15. The Managers shall not assign this agreement or any part thereof without the sanction of the Author, but they may sublet the benefits thereof provided that nothing in this clause be deemed to relieve them of responsibilities towards the Author.
16. Upon the termination of this agreement the Managers shall return to the Author all manuscript of the play in their possession.
17. If the Managers shall at any time forfeit for any reason their right to produce the said play in the United States of America and Canada this shall not in any way affect their license to perform the play throughout the British Empire (except Canada), and if the Managers shall at any time forfeit their license to perform the said play in the British Empire (except Canada) this shall not affect their license to perform the play in the United States of America and Canada provided that they shall have exercised the option provided for in clause five hereof.
18. This agreement does not constitute a partnership between the parties hereto.
19. This agreement is binding upon the heirs executors and administrators and assigns of the Author, and upon the successors and assigns of the Managers.
20. All rights other than those specifically provided for in this agreement are reserved by the Author, including all publication rights, novelisation rights and serial rights.
21. If the Managers shall at any time fail or neglect to observe this agreement or any part thereof the Author shall call attention to any such failure or neglect by means of a letter sent by registered post, and if within twenty-one days

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exclusive license to prepare a play based upon the said novel such play to be submitted to him for his approval which approval shall not be unreasonably withheld.

2. The Dramatist shall have eighteen months from the date of the signing of this agreement to secure a contract upon terms satisfactory to the Author for the production of the play. If the Dramatist shall not have secured a contract for the production of the play within eighteen months of the signing of this agreement then the Author shall be at liberty to terminate this agreement any time after the expiry of the said eighteen months provided that he gives to the Dramatist one month's notice of his desire to terminate such agreement.
3. All sums accruing from the dramatic rights in and to the said play either as royalties, advances on royalties, premiums fees or from any other source shall be divided equally between the Author and the Dramatist share and share alike.
4. The Dramatist shall announce on all programmes posters and other advertising matter connected with the said play that the play is based upon a novel of the same name by
5. The Dramatist shall defray all costs of typing and making arrangements for the said play.
6. If the Author shall lease, sell, or otherwise dispose of the film rights in and to the said novel before the Dramatist shall secure a contract for the production of the play then the Dramatist shall not have any share or interest in such film rights. If the Dramatist shall secure a contract for the production of the play on terms satisfactory to the Author then in the event of the film rights in the novel not having been sold leased or otherwise disposed of upon the date of the signature of the contract for the production of the play then the Author agrees not to sell lease or dispose of the film rights in the novel prior to its production in dramatic form or failing its production prior to the termination of any agreement made for its production owing to non-performance. Upon production of the play the Dramatist shall acquire a one-third interest in the film rights in the said play and novel and any contract for the sale or lease of the film rights shall be subject to the approval of both parties to this agreement and in order to render such contract for the film rights valid

the signatures of both the Dramatist and the Author shall be necessary.

7. This agreement is binding upon the heirs executors administrators and assigns of both the parties hereto.
8. Upon violation of this agreement the Author shall be at liberty to terminate this agreement by a written notice to that effect. It is understood and agreed that upon termination of this agreement for whatever cause the Author shall have no right or claim on the version prepared by the Dramatist.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF THE PARTIES
HERETO HAVE SET THEIR HANDS ON
THE DAY AND YEAR HEREINABOVE
FIRST MENTIONED.

In reproducing both the foregoing contracts I have omitted the agency clause, and mention of this brings me to the fourth method of submitting a play.

Fully eighty per cent of the plays produced are handled by dramatic agents. It is obvious therefore that the beginner should submit his efforts to a good agent in preference to sending them direct to managers. The agents, even more so than on the book side, are acquainted with the requirements and movements of managers and are much more favourably placed in every way. But the agent must be good. The acid test of an agent's standing is the number of plays and dramatists for whom he is responsible. It must not be assumed, however, that the agent will be willing to handle any play submitted to him. Far from it. Only about ten per cent of the plays sent to him are retained for negotiation. But the beginner should certainly try to get an agent to represent him. If the agent isn't impressed by all means let him submit the script himself to managers. Even agents are fallible and sometimes entertain angels unawares.

There are a number of good play agents, and the bigger

literary agencies usually have an active dramatic department. If the aspiring playwright can get a good agent to represent his interests, this is undoubtedly the most promising method of trying to place his work.

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We now come to serialisation, not by any means the least important of the author's outside rights. Serial rights in a non-fiction work obviously depend for their importance on the nature of the book. Some books are quite incapable of serialisation. At first sight it would appear that books of technical interest come into this category, but there is always a market for at least a portion of the material in one of the specialist or trade papers. The serial rights of memoirs or reminiscences are often very valuable, and big prices have been paid by newspapers for these rights. Any book which has a "news value" will similarly appeal to an editor.

It is difficult to decide whether previous publication in a newspaper or magazine has an injurious effect on the sales of the book. It may be contended that such publication, if not actually of the whole of the material, at any rate of the most interesting portions, which is naturally what an editor would select for publication, prevents readers from buying the book when it is published. The balance of opinion seems to be in favour of the theory that the damage, if any, is negligible. The newspaper public is probably a different public altogether from the book public. The majority of publishers take this view, and it is a rare thing for the publisher to object to previous serialisation of a book. Some publishers welcome it, believing that any book readers who may be lost as a result of reading the serial instalments are more than accounted for by reason of the preliminary publicity

which the book has received. Once more, it all depends on the book. Serialisation cuts both ways ; in the case of a disappointing book, serialisation probably does harm, but in the case of a good book, the discussion caused by publication of instalments probably serves to stimulate the general interest, which can only have a favourable effect on the book's sales.

Whatever view may be taken regarding the wisdom of serialisation, the fact remains that serial rights are of considerable direct value to the author. Authors who are not influenced by financial considerations—and many of the distinguished people who write their memoirs are not—can decide for themselves whether or no they prefer preliminary publication in newspaper or magazine. I know one very eminent author who regards it as being undignified. But to the vast majority of writers, serial rights are a welcome source of revenue.

It is not easy to give any estimates of the value of serial rights, since the value naturally varies in accordance with the importance of the book. It sometimes happens that current events invest a book with the importance of topicality, and it follows that the value of the serial rights is immediately enhanced. Market prices also fluctuate ; the reminiscences which will fetch £500 to-day, may to-morrow be worth less or more—it is impossible to say. The general tendency is in the direction of increased prices, competition in Fleet Street especially being keener than ever.

American serial rights are even more valuable than British. The huge circulations enjoyed by many of the leading magazines in the United States enable them to pay rates with which no British magazine could compete. In this country £1,000 is almost the top price paid for the first British serial rights of a novel, whereas in the United

States the sum of \$10,000 has more than once been paid for the American serial rights of a book by an author well "in the public eye."

This market is one that every writer should cultivate and study. Indeed, I imagine that American serial rights, and the possibilities which they open up, figure prominently in the dreams of most writers of fiction both here and across the Atlantic. It is important, therefore, that British authors should appreciate the essential individuality of the type of serial story that the American magazine editor wants. The difference between British and American serial requirements is as real as the difference between the British and American weather, and no one who has not experienced both can judge just what that difference is.

American serial rights of non-fiction books are just as valuable as in the case of novels. The American reading public has—perhaps more than any other reading public in the world—a keen interest in every thing new, everything vital, that "happens along" in the world in which they live. The personalities of foreign statesmen and public figures interest them far more than they interest the average man and woman of France or even Britain. This opens up a wide field for the serialisation of non-fiction books. The magazines and newspapers, too, usually have more space at their disposal for features of this nature than have the majority of papers and periodicals in this country. They can therefore run the serialised version of a travel book, or a book with a topical interest, to a greater length—and therefore pay more—than will be possible in England. An author who has sold the serial rights of his books in both countries for several years told me recently that in every case the American magazine concerned published the whole 70,000 or

80,000 words of the book in question, whereas in this country he had never been able to induce an editor to print more than 30,000 selected from that length.

Second serial rights are the use of material after publication, whether in book or previous serial form. A newspaper or magazine will often purchase the right to publish serially a book or portions of a book which has already appeared, but the prices paid for material bought in this way are naturally much lower, roughly about one third of first serial rates. For the serial rights of a published novel, for instance, which prior to publication might have realised about £200, a fair price for second serial rights would be about £75. The fact that a serial has already appeared in another paper or magazine will not necessarily prevent an editor from buying second serial rights. If, in its previous serial form, it was unlikely to have reached the particular public for which his own paper caters, and yet is the kind of story that will interest his readers, he will usually be glad to consider second rights. Sir Hall Caine is a good example of the type of author whose work has such a universal appeal that it can make successive appearances in different serial markets and thus reach as many different publics.

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Syndication is a market that is rapidly growing in importance from the point of view of the writer of non-fiction books. In America it has been developed to a high pitch of perfection, so that over 75 per cent of the non-fiction books serialised in that country are syndicated—often to as many as fifty or sixty papers. Even in this country, where easy communications and the compact nature of the principal cities are drawbacks to syndication, this method of marketing the serial rights

of an author's work is growing. This was demonstrated when a series of articles by Mr. H. G. Wells was not only published in a London daily newspaper, but simultaneously in newspapers published in Liverpool, Glasgow and elsewhere. Even this wide measure of publicity did not exhaust their value, for the series was afterwards re-issued for a second time.

It will be obvious that only the book which deals with exclusive information of great importance to the public or which bears a famous name can hope to find success by syndication. An article by Mr. Churchill will readily sell all over the world, and could easily be syndicated for simultaneous publication in sixty papers in the United States and six or eight in this country. In the same way an exclusive interview with a famous statesman on some important point of public policy, secured by a journalist, would as readily be accepted by one of the American agencies for syndication, providing, of course, that the subject interested Americans. For the unknown author, on the other hand, there is not yet a large market in syndicating, and he would be better advised to direct his energies towards making his name in other ways more profitable for the time being and leave syndication to be considered as a profit-raising scheme later on, when he has a name to offer the public as well as something they want to read.

The profits made by syndication naturally vary with each individual book. In the United States the usual arrangement is to charge a varying scale of fees according to the importance of the area covered by each newspaper—a New York journal paying considerably more than, say, a Milwaukee paper. The same rule applies to this country, except that the rate paid for a syndicated article by provincial newspapers here is much lower than

the rate that could easily be secured for the same matter in America.

Syndication is not yet a big enough market in this country for the ordinary author to have to worry about mastering its details. There are few agencies that handle this sort of work and few newspapers that reserve much space for the feature that is not exclusive to themselves. But it is a coming source of profit for the author, and therefore the coming writer would be well advised to watch the literary market-place for signs that the day when syndication has at last come seriously to challenge other methods of marketing has arrived.

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Foreign rights are not usually of much intrinsic value to the author, and the continental markets fluctuate from time to time, both in point of number and value. Nevertheless there is a good demand for certain types of English and American novels abroad. Not every type of novel is capable of being translated into a foreign language. At the present time the most active markets for English books are Germany, Scandinavia and Holland. French language rights cover France and Belgium and French Switzerland. Scandinavian rights are grouped linguistically as follows: (1), Danish and Norwegian; (2), Sweden. Very few English books are bought in either Italy or Spain; France is not much better; and Russia rarely buys any rights. The Anglo-Saxon nations are developing an increasing interest in each other's literature, while the Latin nations are buying fewer and fewer translated books, although internal production in these countries is maintained at a high average. The prices paid for foreign rights may seem surprisingly small, but the heavy cost of making a translation must not be

forgotten. About £25 is an averagely good price for the foreign rights of an English novel; £50 is a very good price. Except in the case of a book or novel of international and outstanding importance, anything beyond an outright sale cannot be hoped for under present conditions. It has been until very recently almost impossible to obtain a royalty arrangement for an ordinary book. An interesting exception in recent years was the series of "Tarzan" novels by Edgar Rice Burroughes, which was published in Germany on a royalty basis and proved a gigantic success. In six months the sales of the first three volumes exceeded 200,000 copies. But this is exceptional.

This chapter would not be complete without some reference to the latest market that has come into existence through the advent of broadcasting. A provisional form of agreement between the British Broadcasting Company and the Authors' Society protects authors' rights in this new field. This market is worth consideration from the point of view of publicity, as well as of financial remuneration, but it is only fair that the work of authors and dramatists should not be utilised without some return to the author. This is the provisional agreement referred to:

NEW AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE BRITISH BROADCASTING COMPANY LTD., AND THE INCORPORATED SOCIETY OF AUTHORS, PLAYWRIGHTS AND COMPOSERS

1. That a minimum fee of £2 2s. per Act, Canto or Division be paid by the British Broadcasting Company for a single performance, provided that such Act, Canto or Division exceeds 200 lines in length.
2. That a minimum fee of ros. 6d. be paid for a single performance of a *short poem not exceeding 100 lines in length.*

3. That a minimum fee of £1 1s. be paid for a single performance of a poem *exceeding 100 lines and not exceeding 200 lines in length* and 10s. 6d. for every succeeding 100 lines.
4. That a minimum fee of £1 1s. be paid for a single performance of excerpts, monologues, etc., *not exceeding 200 lines in length*.
5. That in the case of a short stories, excerpts from a book in prose or serial matter, a minimum fee of £1 1s. shall *be paid for the first 1,000 words and pro rata* for every succeeding 1,000 words for a single performance.
(Example: Short Story, 1,500 words—Payment £1 11s. 6d.)
6. That no abridgment or alteration be made from the original without the Author's sanction.
7. That these arrangements stand for a period of 12 months from August 1, 1924.

The chief value to the author, however, of broadcasting rights lies in the possibility of stimulating public interest in his work, with a consequent increase of book sales.

There are several other minor rights in copyright literary property—calendar rights, souvenir rights, cigarette picture rights, gramophone record rights, to name a few—to which it is not possible to devote space. In any case they rarely fall within the scope of the ordinary writer. But enough ground has been covered in this chapter to indicate to the author the importance and relative value of subsidiary rights.

CHAPTER XI

THE AUTHOR AND PUBLICITY

Books, like any other commodity, are subject to the familiar law of supply and demand. Public demand for a book is created in a variety of ways, some of which differ from ordinary commercial processes on account of the peculiar relationship of the author and his work. Having written his book, should the author confine his subsequent interest in its progress to the semi-annual collection of royalties, leaving the problem of salesmanship entirely to the publisher?

The majority of authors, let it be said at once, are willing to help the publisher in selling their books in any way compatible with their personal and professional dignity. That is to say they are willing to have paragraphs printed about themselves and photographs published, provided that by such means their sales will be increased. Not many will personally enquire for their books at the libraries or at railway station bookstalls, although I know several authors who put their shoulders to the wheel in this way. It is also true that many authors welcome publicity for its own sake. Such vanity is harmless enough; whether an excess of publicity promotes actual sales is open to question.

In fact it is difficult, almost impossible, to gauge the value of publicity in its direct relation to sales. But it

is a problem from which the author cannot separate himself, for he is permanently associated with the books that bear his name. The man who actually makes soap, or cigarettes, or furniture, is of no interest personally to the public that buys the article; but the author is, undoubtedly, and the public that reads his books is naturally interested, (perhaps only to a mild extent, it is true), in the personality of the author. The author has his "public" and they are reasonably and properly curious about himself and his personal activities. How far this interest or curiosity should be satisfied depends on the personal predilections of the author concerned, and the potential selling force created by publicity in relation to the author.

The theory that publicity sells books, or helps to sell books, is, indeed, open to question. There are authors who don't believe in publicity, and of whom the public is allowed to know nothing; such is Miss Ethel M. Dell, perhaps the most widely read writer of our time, whose photograph has never, to my knowledge, been published. Nor does Miss Dell rely upon reviews of her books. Her public, like Topsy, has just "grow'd." On the other hand, many well-known authors attribute their success largely to the publicity they and their books have attained. There is a good deal to be said for both sides. Perhaps it would be near the truth to say that Miss Dell is not the type of author to benefit from widespread publicity; her public, if one may say so, is not to be influenced by newspaper comment, nor would she be likely to increase the number of her readers by taking a more active part in social or literary life. It has also been suggested that her complete retirement from publicity has caused a certain mystery to attach itself to her personality, with the result that people read her books more eagerly and in greater

numbers than ever before. But Miss Dell is probably an exception.

The truth, I expect, lies somewhere between the two extremes. A judicious amount of publicity probably exerts influence on an author's sales. The most valuable kind of publicity is that which reaches an author's potential public; that is to say, an article in the *Bookman* on Mr. Walter de la Mare, or an article in the *Tatler* on Mr. Michael Arlen, is more likely to be productive of practical results than the same articles in a popular periodical like *Answers*. (I plead forgiveness from the editor of *Answers* should this heterodox suggestion outrage his eye.)

Publicity, in any case, and whatever form it may take, should not be regarded as anything but a literary trimming. It is, I am convinced, not nearly so important as its enthusiastic devotees would have us believe. The Great Reading Public may be amused or mildly interested in the personality of the author or in news of his present and future work, but it would be claiming too much to assert that publicity in itself was responsible for attracting readers to an author's work. The appeal of books is more fundamental than that, as we have seen in an earlier chapter. But it serves an undeniably useful purpose in keeping the name of the author in front of the reader, or in reminding him of his intention to read a particular book by that author, or in suggesting the title of a book to add to his lending library list. Thus and thus are literary reputations built up—or destroyed.

For publicity is a two-edged weapon and it sometimes cuts both ways. The name of Mr. Driver Quill may occur so frequently in print that the reader, out of curiosity, may decide and eventually bring himself to read one of Mr. Driver Quill's novels; but if he doesn't like that novel,

no amount of subsequent publicity will induce him to probe further into Mr. Quill's work. But the important point is that he has been induced to sample it—and then it depends on the book. In fact it almost always does depend on the book. Without underestimating the value of publicity in all its forms, one cannot too often be reminded of that fundamental truth.

A more practical consideration for the young writer is the extent to which he can make use of the weapon of publicity, whatever its value in the literary armoury. The average young author's attitude towards publicity is "It's worth trying; it may help me, and if it doesn't, there's no harm done." An important point to remember is that publicity is not to be had for the asking. In securing, or endeavouring to secure publicity the measure of the public's interest has to be taken into consideration. Most new authors are nonentities as far as the public is concerned and I am convinced it is merely wasted effort for an author who has still to win his literary spurs to be paragraphed and pictured. Until the public expresses a definite interest in an author's work he should refrain from the practice of supplying paragraphs directly or indirectly to the Press. As a matter of fact, the Press usually supplies the necessary corrective, as the foundation of all editorial publicity is "news interest." Nevertheless some young authors suffer from such a confusion of thought in this connection that they imagine it is urgently desirable to get something into print about themselves. If the circumstances are exceptional the practice is, of course, justifiable.

If, for instance, an author has had an adventurous career before turning his hand to writing or if he has previously earned distinction in another sphere, it may be worth while supplying some personal data to the

publicity department of his publishers. Which brings us to an important point.

The author should not, as a rule, directly approach the Press. It is a mistake to cultivate the acquaintance of or to seek to influence journalists or reviewers. It is another matter altogether if the author is approached by journalists asking for information, but that is not likely to happen to him until he has quite definitely "arrived." Nothing prejudices any conscientious newspaper man so much as an author soliciting publicity. The critic who values his reputation is very properly biassed against any personal attempt on the part of the author to ingratiate himself. Yet almost every day one hears of authors who, by personal interview, letters, introductions, and other means seek to secure publicity. One young novelist I know of, presuming upon his slight personal acquaintance—although, naturally enough, the busy news editor in question hadn't the least recollection of ever having met the over-enterprising author—wrote letter after letter to a prominent Sunday newspaper, hinting, hoping, suggesting, pleading for a review of his first novel. Such mistaken tactics—as well as the doubtful good taste of the epistolary bombardment—only exasperated the editor. As it happened the book was feeble and no review of it has ever appeared in that newspaper.

The proper, and in fact the only legitimate channel is the publishers' publicity department. Most progressive publishers attach great importance to this branch of book salesmanship. As a general rule the author is approached by the publicity manager who diplomatically requests the provision of such personal material as will assist the firm in selling the author's books. It is customary in the case of inexperienced authors for him to indicate the type of

material suitable, for it is surprising how rarely authors appreciate the difference between what is fit for publication and what is not. Quite intelligent authors often have a hazy idea that the public want to know how many white mice they keep, or that they have made a pet of a toad or a mule, or that they invariably wear green underclothing. The revelation of such personal eccentricities does occasionally occur in print but only in the slushiest of gossip columns, and usually about inferior actors and actresses.

On the other hand, the reading public is genuinely interested in authentic, informative statements about the private activities of their favourite authors. If a novel, say, sells three thousand copies or so, it follows that at least twice that number of people have read the story, and of this number certainly the majority would be interested to read a personal item about the author.

Any information of this kind must, however, have a definite news value, or its chances of appearing in print are remote. Space is too valuable and readers too alert nowadays for editors to print anything which doesn't definitely contribute to the interest of their papers. And as it naturally follows that authors are not themselves the best judges of what will and what will not interest the public, it is usually the best plan for material to be supplied to the publishers and for them to use their discretion in selecting and arranging such material for distribution to appropriate channels in Fleet Street. Thus the author can to an extent be guided by his own feeling in this rather delicate matter. He should supply nothing which he wouldn't care to have appear in print. The publishers can sift the material and distribute only what is of legitimate interest and news value and circularise the Press without loss of dignity.

It is a recognised journalistic practice for publishers to supply "puffs" about books and authors to the newspapers, and although pressure on newspaper space and in some quarters a disinclination to give gratuitous publicity have in recent years limited the operation of publishers in this direction, they still enjoy the privilege. Not unnaturally some newspapers are more inclined to give editorial publicity to those firms who advertise in their columns, but it does not necessarily follow that news of books and authors will be excluded because the firm that publishes them is not one of the paper's regular advertisers, any more than it follows that special editorial prominence is given to regular advertisers. Editorial publicity, as distinct from reviews, depends on two things: first, whether the paper in question opens its columns to book news, and secondly, and equally important, whether the book news sent by the publisher is of sufficient interest to justify the paper printing it.

Reviews are quite another matter. It is the custom of most newspapers and periodicals to print reviews of new books of importance subject to the amount of space available. No reputable journal is influenced in the slightest by advertising considerations. Advertisement revenue is very welcome, but it is (I am glad to say from practical experience) very rarely permitted to interfere with editorial policy. As a matter of fact, on most great newspapers the editorial and advertising departments work quite independently of each other.

And now we come to one of the most important phases of the author's career. Reviews or press criticisms of his work may be regarded as of varying importance. Some authors profess to be indifferent to press criticism; others are keenly sensitive to the expressed opinions of experts and others, and relish praise and appreciation

as keenly as they dread disapproval and indifference. I do not think I am far wrong if I suggest that however indifferent to criticism some authors may pretend to be nearly everybody who writes for publication attaches great importance to reviews of his work.

The publisher is responsible for sending review copies to the Press, and the number of copies sent, and to which papers, is as a rule best left to his discretion. This point is usually covered by a contract clause. The author cannot too often be reminded that the publisher's interest and his own are identical and that the publisher has as much reason, if not more, for wishing to exploit every means in his power to sell the book as the author. Parenthetically, one has to admit that not every publisher is as fully alive to the science of selling books as he might be, and provided that the author is qualified to do so, there is no reason why he should not contribute to the desired end by diplomatic suggestions to the publisher.

In the matter of reviews it does indeed often happen that the author can profitably co-operate with the publisher, and most publishers are inclined to welcome suggestions from authors in regard to the distribution of review copies. Frequently the author has a number of personal friends in Fleet Street who review books or may be instrumental in getting books reviewed, and it would be quixotic if the author declined to take advantage of the opportunity. At the same time, the author should be sure of his ground before suggesting to his publisher that special copies should be sent to the people he knows ; by presuming on slight acquaintance the author may be doing himself more harm than good.

We now come to the vexed question of the relationship of reviews and sales. Do reviews sell books ? It is very difficult to say. In practice, one so often

encounters books that have glowing press notices and negligible sales, and, on the other hand, books that receive only slight attention in the Press—and generally indifferent or sarcastic in tone at that—whose sales are comparatively enormous, that at first sight it certainly does look as if there were no connection whatever between the two.

The explanation is probably that the reviewers do not represent public taste, and that people who read press criticisms and are influenced by them represent a higher grade of literary taste than the average. Probably only a small proportion of the reading public is interested in reviews. At any rate it is fairly certain that an author like Ethel M. Dell is independent of press criticism; reviews of her novels merely serve the purpose of indicating to her loyal and enthusiastic public that she has written a new book, and for them that is enough. In just the same way, really "popular" plays do not depend to any but a slight extent on the opinions of dramatic critics. Lyceum melodrama appeals to a public that does not read dramatic criticisms.

On the other hand and for the same reason, many authors who invariably receive eulogistic reviews cannot boast even respectable sales. It is sometimes hard to convince an author that good reviews don't necessarily mean good sales. To publishers this is no phenomenon; but the poor author who plaintively cannot understand that while his book has attracted such favourable notice, it yet hasn't apparently sold, is sometimes unjustifiably suspicious of the publisher.

This frequently occurs in the case of books of general interest as well as fiction. There is one type of book which usually attracts widespread newspaper attention out of all proportion to its ultimate sales. This is the book

which contains a large number of good stories. News editors are always on the lookout for books of this kind and "gut" them mercilessly for the news columns, as distinct from the regular book review columns, on the day of publication. This process is sometimes known as "picking out the plums." A column or so of liberal quotations from the book is grist to the mill of the news editor. It has been contended that this practice is unfair to the author and publisher, on the ground that readers will not trouble to buy or borrow a book if they can have the cream served up to them in the form of a newspaper article. It is certainly true that the sales of such books cannot be estimated in proportion to the attention they receive in the Press. On the other hand, such "reviews" are read by a very large public and are, one may suppose, regarded as an indication of the book's importance. If there is nothing much in the book beyond a number of quotable anecdotes, it is doubtful whether reviews will increase its sales; but if the book is of such merit that quotation serves the purpose of indicating its quality, it usually happens that it sells on a larger scale as a result of the attention it has received. It all depends on the book.

To the publisher, who is as a rule interested in reviews of a book only in so far as they will promote its sales, the question of publicity is less important than it is to the author. Sales are the acid test. Although the publisher naturally likes to see his judgment vindicated by favourable reviews of a book, he is above all a business man, and his attitude towards press criticism is naturally determined by the effect it has on a book's sales. The experience of most publishers is that good reviews will help a good book enormously (a "good" book in the sense of a saleable book) and that although good reviews will slightly

benefit a "bad" book they cannot be expected to sell it if it proves to be the kind of book the public will not buy.

As I have already pointed out, publishers are not invariably guided in their choice of books solely by considerations of potential sales. One publisher of my acquaintance said to me recently, "I prefer to publish fiction of quality, what most people call "highbrow" novels, even if the margin of profit is very small, rather than concentrate on slush; but I must admit I couldn't afford the luxury of pleasing myself if it weren't for So-and-so and So-and-So"—and he named two very popular writers in his list—"who pay my rent and salaries and overhead charges."

The author, however, cannot be expected to view the question of reviews in the same detached way that the publisher does. Naturally, the author likes to feel that appreciative reviews result in more sales, but that is not the only aspect he considers. To him it is of considerable personal importance. The majority of writers are not indifferent to their literary reputation, and reputation, as distinct from income, is undoubtedly created by the critics. But the author should not lose sight of the fact that although a good Press may bring immense personal satisfaction, it by no means follows that the sales of his work will be proportionate.

There are several points of practical detail with which the new author is generally unfamiliar. First, the question of press cuttings. The "Literary Year Book" or "The Writers' and Artists' Year Book" mention the names and addresses of the best press cutting services. A subscription of a guinea covers the supply of 100 cuttings on any subject or subjects and the rate is usually subject to reduction when a larger number is ordered. As it is

frequently difficult, and consequently more expensive, to obtain cuttings from back numbers of papers, it is as well to notify the press cutting agency about a week before the publication of a book, or if advance notices of either the book or the author are expected a few days before the release of such material. In special instances the agencies will usually undertake to obtain notices that have appeared before the subscription was taken out, but for this it is customary to pay an increased fee, varying with the difficulty experienced in securing them. It is advisable to keep press cuttings carefully, as after a few months it is often impossible to replace them, as back numbers of periodicals are frequently out of print. Although none of the agencies is infallible, they are surprisingly good in the efficiency of their service, very few notices escaping their attention.

Then there is the question of photographs. It is customary for most of the leading photographers to invite professional men and women like authors to have a complimentary sitting. This is usually profitable to the photographer in two ways: in the first place, if the author likes the resulting photograph he often orders some for his personal use (although he is under no obligation to do so) usually paying for them at a reduced professional rate. If the author doesn't buy any he is usually presented free with one or two finished photographs; and, secondly, the photographer is at liberty to sell to the press the right of reproduction of the photograph, receiving a fee from the paper that publishes it. These fees range from 10s. 6d. to as much as four guineas in the London press, and less in the provincial press. Let me state at once that it is very unusual for a paper to pay anything beyond the minimum fee for the privilege of publishing an author's photograph. In the case of actresses and

Society women whose beauty renders them eligible for inclusion in the special magazine illustrated supplements a fee of three or four guineas is often paid for the exclusive right of reproduction but authors don't as a rule qualify in this direction.

Where the photographer retains the copyright, which he always does if the author doesn't pay for the photograph, he is entitled to sell reproduction rights. The author, however, unless he be so distinguished in his profession that he can afford to disregard the point, should remember that editors are not as a rule likely to pay for the privilege of printing his photograph. Editors are well aware that by publishing an author's photograph they are giving him useful publicity—ergo, why pay for it? As a matter of fact most authors are sensible enough to realise this, and by paying for the photographs that they have taken and thus acquiring the copyright, are in a position to supply prints to any paper that may happen to want them, free of copyright fees, "non-copyright" as they are usually called. Some of the leading photographers also wisely recognise that their prospects of selling photographs of comparatively unknown authors to the press are remote, and are willing to supply prints free for reproduction on condition that the name of the photographer is acknowledged when the picture is published. They, in their turn, are conscious of the commercial value of publicity.

It is inadvisable to supply mounted cabinet portraits for the purpose of press reproduction, because in the first place it is more than probable that they will be damaged in their progress through the hands of blockmakers and others; and, secondly, they are often inconvenient to handle. The most practical plan is to have a number of press prints made from the negative. The photographer

will usually be pleased to supply these for a shilling or two per print. These are plain reproductions of the negative on either glossy or matt paper. The art editor much prefers press prints, because he can have them "touched up" as required.

It may seem unnecessary to warn authors that diminutive "snapshots" are not suitable for the purpose of reproduction, but so many presumably intelligent people seem to think that diminutive or blurred photographs are good enough that it is as well to mention that the requirements of a photograph suitable for press reproduction are, briefly, adequate size, i.e., not less than about 5 by 4 inches, clear definition, and appropriate for the purpose. I mention this last, because quite recently the author of a novel which his publishers described as "a notable contribution to a grave social problem" brought along a snapshot of himself thoroughly enjoying life on the Giant Railway at Wembley. For the benefit of the absolutely ignorant, I should perhaps add that the size of a published picture isn't necessarily the size of the original print. Usually it is reduced in the process known as blockmaking. These and other technical details will be made clear to the enquiring author by the publicity manager of his publishers.

I have already referred to the imprudent practice of approaching reviewers. There is one point which deserves the young author's careful attention. It is natural, perhaps, when an unfair or unsympathetic review of his book appears that the author should want to write to the reviewer, or to the editor of the paper, to protest against such treatment, and to explain that the reviewer has regarded his book in the wrong light, or has overlooked an important point, or even bitterly to suggest that the reviewer hasn't read the book at all. On a question of

fact, or misquotation, it is both legitimate and advisable for an author to address a brief letter of correction or explanation to the editor; but in any other case it is emphatically unwise for the author to reply to any criticism of his book. The busy reviewer resents it; if the author's view is wrong and his protest merely the expression of his injured pride, the reviewer naturally resents the waste of time; and if by chance there is something to be said on the author's side (who knows? That book may have been skipped—even critics are human) the reviewer probably resents it all the more. No one likes to be told that his judgments are either careless or mistaken. In any case the author who replies to reviewers is so liable to irritate them that the practice is undoubtedly one to be avoided. For the sake of his future books let the author swallow his indignation and keep silent.

It is sometimes hard for the author to realise that a "slating" review is just as likely to sell copies of his book as a column of enthusiastic praise. In his indignation he may overlook the fact that it may be what is known as a good "selling" review. Nowadays the new novelist should be grateful if his book gets any appreciable measure of attention. The good old days when a novel could be sure of lengthy and leisured appreciation from all quarters have vanished. To-day the busy reviewer dips into the new novel—and every day brings a lofty pile into his office—and unless it looks promising to the experienced eye it will probably be dismissed in a few lines, if it gets noticed at all.

It is a worse fate to be neglected altogether or damned with faint praise than to be "slated."

Every author is a law unto himself where publicity is concerned. It is in most cases an important aspect of

his work and is commercially valuable, and with that we must leave the subject of editorial publicity.

The advertising of books has been partially dealt with in earlier chapters of this book. This branch of book salesmanship falls within the province of publisher rather than author and is too important a subject to be dismissed by any brief comment, which is all that would be possible in the space at my disposal. It is a matter which as a rule may be safely left to the publisher whose interest in the selling of books is, or should be, identical with his author's.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT PUBLISHERS WANT

NOTE.—*This chapter contains a statement of individual requirements from over forty different publishers. In some instances the views expressed are those of individual members of the firm, but are not less valuable on that account. There are a few notable omissions, but the symposium may be taken as representative and will, I hope, be of service to authors generally. I am much indebted to all the publishers who have so courteously and readily contributed to the chapter.*

PHILIP ALLAN AND CO., 5, Quality Court, W.C.2.

While the productions of Philip Allan and Co. are not limited to any particular kind of book, yet it is true that they concentrate on certain classes.

First among these is what may be termed the "beautiful" book; the handsome reprint of some lesser known classic, or the edition, sometimes limited and always luxurious, of a new book on art or architecture, travel or sport. Books of this nature require a special care and an individual touch in design and production, tasks to which Mr. Allan invariably devotes his personal attention.

Other works in which this house is more especially interested are political books of an educative character, books

on hunting, shooting, fishing—especially fishing, and fiction that reaches a certain standard of literary excellence.

Philip Allan & Co.'s interests further include biography, memoirs, books for children, books of adventure and *belles lettres*.

GEORGE ALLEN AND UNWIN, LTD., 40, Museum Street, W.C.1.

Owing partly to the fact that this firm has grown up out of the amalgamation of four other publishing firms, its scope is an exceptionally wide one, and it would be difficult to find any class of book which is not represented in our list. There are some kinds of books which are represented much more fully than others, but we do not specialise to the exclusion of books on any subject whatever. This firm does not publish any magazines or journals, and consequently short stories or single poems are useless to us. Nor do we care, except under very special circumstances, to publish pamphlets or small books of an ephemeral nature. With these exceptions we publish books on all subjects, and written from all points of view.

**ERNEST BENN, LTD. (BENN BROTHERS, LTD.),
8, Bouverie Street, E.C.**

We want the following :

(a) Books on the fine and applied arts embodying in their text serious research and in their illustrations fine "documents," especially those never reproduced before.

(b) Scientific and technical books written with a view to the requirements of the special markets concerned.

We do *not* require :

(a) "Popular" art books, art books hashed up from existing works, or "chatty" books.

(b) "Popular" technical or "popular" scientific books except books which (like Lodge's "Atoms and Rays") have a serious scientific value as well as a "popular" appeal.

A. AND C. BLACK, LTD., 4, 5 and 6, Soho Square, W.1.

Messrs. Black were the pioneers of the modern colour book, of which they now issue an extensive and popular series. They also publish the Menpes Series of Great Masters in colour facsimile, which represent some of the finest examples of British colour engraving and printing.

They issue an important series of books of reference, comprising that well-known annual biographical dictionary *Who's Who*, perhaps the most indispensable reference book, *The Writers' and Artists' Year Book*, *Black's Medical Dictionary*, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, *Dictionary of Pictures* and *Gardening Dictionary* and *Careers for Our Sons*.

Messrs. Black also publish many books on general literature, science, history, travel, boys' books and social works, and suggestions on these lines will always be carefully considered.

WM. BLACKWOOD AND SONS, 37, Paternoster Row, E.C.4, and 45, George Street, Edinburgh.

This firm undertakes works in general literature—history, biography, travel, criticism, etc. Fiction by new writers is carefully considered, stress being laid on the literary quality of the work submitted. Juvenile books and "domestic" fiction are not solicited. "Blackwood's Magazine," conducted by this firm, offers to unknown writers a valuable opening for articles, sketches and stories of varying length. The Magazine is not illustrated, and articles based merely on compilation are not acceptable.

GEOFFREY BLES, 22, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, S.W.1.

Presumably all publishers seek the Good in two forms, good press notices and good sales. At any rate I welcome any MS. that is likely to achieve one or other—or both!—of these *desiderata*.

I am specially interested in books on the fine arts (such as "Rare English Glasses of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," which I recently published), and also in books of travel, like Merlin Taylor's "Where Cannibals Roam," which confirmed my suspicion that all the world loves a good cannibal.

As to fiction, I like a story that is original and distinctive, either in plot, treatment, or "setting" (for, other things being equal, Nicaragua as a *milieu* is more interesting than Surbiton). I am attracted by tales of mystery and adventure, and seek that most elusive creation, the "really fine love story,"—praying that I shall recognise it when I get it!

**THORNTON BUTTERWORTH, 15, Bedford Street,
Strand, W.C.2.**

Apart from medical and law works there is no limit to the sort of books I want—except that they must be good in the sense that they possess that indefinable quality, human interest, or that they serve some really useful purpose. I much prefer an excellent book by a new and quite unknown author to an inferior or average book by one who is so famous that his name would shine in my list like a star. That I pride myself also on seeing some of the best work of famous writers issue from my house goes without saying; but every MS. that comes to me, even though it wears the marks of having been turned away from many doors, has the fullest and most careful consideration; consequently, I do not remember that, so far, I have ever let one slip through my fingers that I have subsequently had reason to be sorry I lost. Dickens tells us how, in fear and trembling, one dark night, when he could not be seen, he dropped his first MS. into a publisher's letter-box; and I am still undisillusioned enough to hope when I am untying a parcel from a new novelist that I may be entertaining another Dickens unawares, and I give him every attention accordingly. More often than not, I confess, I have been

disappointed, but this hope and the fact that any day may bring another book of the kind I am looking for, and that some days do, keeps my interest in the search unflaggingly alive. That is the fascination of publishing—you are like a miner picking your way through a dreary waste of worthless stuff, and your next stroke may uncover a vein of gold. Perhaps because of the pains I take to discover the right thing, whenever I publish a book I feel as much concern for its welfare as if I had written it myself; if it fails to win the success it deserves (as even the best books will at times), I am more sorry on the author's account than I am on my own; for, after all, a publisher publishes many books in a season; he does not, like the author, carry all his eggs in one basket.

If I may mention a few of the books I naturally pride myself on having published—Mrs. Asquith's *Memoirs*; Mr. Winston Churchill's brilliant work, "*The World Crisis*"; Mr. Arthur Weigall's studies in Egyptology; Mrs. Stirling's "*Life of William and Evelyn de Morgan*"; the novels and stories of W. B. Maxwell, Stephen McKenna, John Russell, Mary Johnston, Ibañez, Thomas Burke, to say nothing of history, natural history, sport, travel, art—these are the sort of books I want; these, and, as I say, books of practically every description if only they have real qualities of interest and workmanship to recommend them. A dull book is its own condemnation. Everything is interesting, and however wide an author's knowledge may be, however sound his scholarship, if he cannot write interestingly on any subject he has made his own, he has not really mastered his art, and he is not for me. To be inaccurate is the eighth deadly sin, and to be accurate but dull is the ninth. Probably I shall never get all the books I want, but I have got a good many of them, and if I don't get a good many more it will not be my fault, but the fault of the authors who do not write them, or do not give me an opportunity of seeing them. My ambition is not to have an enormous list, but a list in which there shall be nothing that will not help to strengthen the general reader's faith in my imprint.

**JONATHAN CAPE, LTD., 30, Bedford Square,
W.C.1.**

Our primary need is for books that really are books and are neither machine-made stuff compiled with paste and scissors, nor last novels by moribund authors who used once to "sell." While we publish many novels, we publish also, and are particularly interested in, that class of books loosely described as "General Literature." In this category we include volumes of reminiscence, not of the variety described by Sir Edmund Gosse as "bloated biography," but books which from the point of view of interest are worth the time and labour of writing, and which have in addition genuine literary value. We do not exclude more definitely historical books, several of which appear in our catalogue. Volumes of essays are welcomed, and so are books to which can only be applied that curious description *belles lettres*; books, that is to say, comparable to Mr. Percy Lubbock's "Earlham."

Poetry is always supposed to be difficult to sell. It may be, but we are interested in it and have had some measure of success. Mr. Roy Campbell's "Flaming Terrapin," for instance, had to be reprinted very shortly after publication.

What we always look for in works of fiction is originality, definite literary quality, and what we consider to be an appeal which will spread outwards from the literary coteries and cliques to a much larger public. A difficult combination, but not impossibly rare. To us the name of the author matters little. If he, or she, has written other books, so much the better, if not, he probably will and we shall then have solid foundations on which to build in the future. We are not afraid of volumes of short stories; our catalogue contains a large variety of them. We have published a number of books translated from foreign languages, and several more are projected. In this connection we should like to utter two words of warning to would-be translators. First, the fact that a book has sold by hundreds of thousands in the country of origin does not necessarily mean that it will have any appeal

to English readers. Secondly, we are particular about the quality of any translations we publish. They must, in short, be English.

During the last few years a much larger proportion of American books have appeared in English editions. We can claim to have been responsible for this to some considerable extent. The same standards have, of course, been applied to the American as to the English books on our list. Only a few years ago all American books were regarded with the utmost suspicion in this country, but the success of such books as Mr. Sinclair Lewis's "Babbitt" and "Martin Arrowsmith" has modified that attitude very considerably. We, at all events, continue to publish and to sell many American books, and see no reason to vary our policy.

**CASSELL AND CO., LTD., La Belle Sauvage,
Ludgate Hill, E.C.4.**

"We want to publish any books that anybody wants to read. If it is a novel and has a real story we want it, provided it is not salacious. If it is a book of memoirs it must be a book that will interest outside the writer's family. If it is a biography of someone, it must be a biography with a new viewpoint. If a writer came to me with a life of Christ that was new, I would publish it; if he came with a novel, the plot of which was the oldest under the sun, but had a new angle, I would publish it.

"The new angle, the different method of treating anything, is what I want. Both fiction and biographies are becoming set and staid in their treatment and limitation. Writers are afraid to get out of the rut.

"It may not be their fault. I don't know. But as a publisher I say that I am looking for the man or woman who has a new vision, even if it be on the oldest theme in the world.

"We are tired of sex novels; we are tired of imitations of Mrs. Gaskell. We want in our books life as we live it, with

all its romance, its humanity, in imitation of nobody, but with a clear-cut recording of ourselves. We love to read about ourselves when the writer knows us as we really are."

—MR. NEWMAN FLOWER.

JOHN CASTLE, 7, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2.

Fiction; Belles Lettres; Travel; Memoirs; Literary and Historical Studies; Books on Art; Biographies and Bibliographies.



We would almost prefer our imprint, as seen here, to speak for itself. The mediæval castles standing impressively along the Marches of England still convey that sense of reliability and purpose which was the motive of their great builders. To-day, the policy directing the publishing activities of John Castle is to make that firm's imprint a guarantee mark of reliability for interest and service. All books which serve these purposes may therefore be included under our "wants"—from the novel in all its forms to authoritative works of reference. Among recent successful publications issued over this imprint is a critical work on the novel of to-day; a valuable illustrative record of London; a collection of prose and verse; and one on the art of etching. Mention of these indicates our range of publishing. Our authors have been equally drawn from the ranks of the formerly unknown as from such writers as Conrad, Walter de la Mare, John Drinkwater, Gerald Gould, and W. P. Robins, R.E., who, by the way, drew the original of this imprint, after it had been devised by the Founder of the firm of John Castle.

CHAPMAN AND HALL, LTD., 11, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2.

"Whatever a publisher may say for the purposes of proclamation, the fact remains that what all publishers want is the book that will sell. The difficulty, of course, is to spot a

seller in advance. Our own firm is always on the look-out for new writers of talent, and we may claim to have introduced not a few to the public, to our own and the public's advantage. I may mention Mr. Temple Thurston, whose first book, "The Apple of Eden," had been refused all over London before it came to us. I do not think it was a very difficult matter to spot a winner there. Another such author was Mr. Ridgwell Cullum, and yet another, Mr. Desmond Coke. More recently we have been privileged to publish the first novels of Mr. Norman Davey and Mrs. Beatrice Kean Seymour, both of whom have met with wide popular successes. We are always on the look-out for good volumes of reminiscences, adventure and sport. Our technical and engineering side is now one of the largest branches of the business. During the last few years we have published many of the most successful engineering works of the time.

"There is, in fact, no sort of book for which a reasonable popularity may be expected, which we are not open to consider. Probably every publisher in London would say exactly the same thing for himself."—MR. ARTHUR WAUGH.

**CHATTO AND WINDUS, 97 & 99, St. Martin's Lane,
W.C.2.**

Every publisher who is deeply interested in his business regards it rather as a pleasure than a "fatigue." Our own pleasure lies quite simply in the publication of books of good literary quality. Our announcement lists and catalogues will show what we mean. The books may be works of imagination: novels, poems, plays. They may be contributions to history, biography, art or science; or contributions to criticism and scholarship. (Books on purely technical scientific and educational subjects we do not attempt.) Or, again, they may fall under the wide categories of *belles lettres* and "general." But whatever the book, whether it be the life of an eminent person or a novel, whether it be on music or on sport, it may be taken as one that has given us pleasure to publish

and one that we believe does reach a certain standard of general excellence and literary distinction.

It would be absurd to ignore the financial side of business. At least a modicum of prosperity is necessary to enable you to publish what you want. But we do not insist on "popular" and "best-selling" qualities above all others. We have thus declined bad books and books which we did not like, and we have not been dismayed by their subsequent success elsewhere. Conversely, we are not unduly disturbed by the apparent failure of books we have published; we have faith in them and feel sure they will compel attention in the long run. There is a great deal of luck in the reception of a book by the public.

We are not afraid of authors because they are unlucky, and are glad to stick to them as long as they wish to stick to us. From this it follows that we are not shy to make experiments, and of these experiments perhaps none are more numerous than translations from modern languages. We do not, however, publish for the sake of publishing, in order to swell out our turnover, and so it often happens that during some seasons we publish more than during others.

Our interest in our publications is a very personal one. We take great pains over the production and appearance of our books, and whatever we publish we endeavour to sell and push to the best of our ability, for we consider that it is not fair to an author to take up his work if we are not ready to do our best for it in every way.

W. COLLINS, SONS, AND CO., LTD., 48, Pall Mall, S.W.1.

"Like all other publishers, we long to find a genius. The Conrads and Galsworthys of the future are what we hungrily seek. We are always searching, with perhaps credulous optimism, in the books submitted to us, for that flash of creative genius which signifies the arrival of a new comet. Such discoveries are the publisher's chief compensation, for what finer thrill can he have than that of producing over his imprint the first work of a creative artist of the highest calibre (pro-

vided, of course, that that creative artist can be securely tied up?). However, we have to be content with the following modest ambitions:

“(1) To discover a genuine humorist, that rarest bird. What a fortune there is waiting for a really funny fellow!

“(2) To light upon a lady, or possibly a gentleman, who will reproduce at regular intervals, well told, well constructed tales of sentiment, what highbrows describe as ‘tripe.’ It may be tripe, but it must be sincere genuine tripe, and not synthetic tripe.

“(3) To find and develop the born detective writer, and the capacity to construct a tale of murder—it should be murder—a flawless masterpiece of deduction and analysis is horribly rare.

“What don’t we want?

“We tremendously don’t want any more of those deceptive autobiographists, the One Book folk, who put everything they have ever experienced, everybody and everything they have ever loved, hated and observed, into 70,000 words, and for evermore type away in vain.”—MR. H. WAKEFIELD.

**GEORGE G. HARRAP AND CO., LTD., 39-41,
Parker Street, Kingsway, W.C.2.**

“To the question put to me by Mr. Michael Joseph, ‘What books do you want, and what books do you *not* want for your list?’ I would like to reply that I want good books, and that I don’t want bad ones. I feel, however, that a clearer definition is necessary, and so, if I may, I will make the attempt.

“The list of works published by my House is not restricted to any particular subject. I am ambitious and am always hopeful of seeing our imprint upon books that are a definite contribution to literature, whether the subject be educational, general, travel or fiction. Although I welcome works of already established authors, for I feel that these are needed to give strength to a publisher’s list, I don’t close the door to the unknown writer who has his or her position to make—rather do I welcome the opportunity of examining work by beginners that has been conscientiously and seriously done.

"I have little time for literature whose only merit is sensationalism, or which appeals solely to the senses. This I would leave to others.

"There is a large fiction public awaiting really good love stories, and tales of adventure; just as there is a healthy demand for stories of travel into unknown parts. These are the type of books that I want, and, in addition, literature of a general character which can be honestly and enthusiastically recommended to the public."—MR. GEORGE S. HARRAP.

WILLIAM HEINEMANN, LTD., 21, Bedford Street, Strand, W.C.2.

Our list is a very comprehensive one, and no book is really outside the scope of it, providing that work is of permanent interest or of undoubted literary merit.

The firm has always specialised in the discovery of new literary talent. A first novel creates excitement in 21, Bedford Street, before it is read, and it has been our good fortune to start a good many now successful novelists in their careers.

It goes without saying that biographies, reminiscences, personal or otherwise, historical works and books of travel are welcomed, and we are always glad to read poetry, although our standard in this respect is very high. We are also glad to read volumes of essays and to publish them if they illuminate the subjects with which they treat, either by beauty of style or originality of thought. It is also, and has always been, our desire to publish distinguished translations of outstanding foreign books, but here again our standard of excellence in translation is high.

Scientific books—monographs, treatises and text books in medicine and other subjects are considered by a special department of the firm—William Heinemann, Ltd. (Medical and Scientific Books), at 20, Bedford Street.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON, LTD., St. Paul's House, Warwick Square, E.C.4.

The publisher wants two things. He wants to publish

books that redound to the credit of his House. He wants to publish books that the public wants to read. It is our opinion that these two aspirations are perhaps easier to harmonise to-day than they have ever been in the past. The immense increase during the last ten years of the number of people who like to read good books shows that the general standard of literary taste is by no means degenerating.

The successful writer is always the one who looks beyond the publisher to the public. The best advice that we can offer to any author whose position is not yet assured is to know the books which are in demand on the tables of the leading book-sellers and upon the shelves of the great circulating libraries, and, with that knowledge, to write his own book in his own way.

MARTIN HOPKINSON AND CO., LTD., 14, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2.

We are interested in the following classes of books :

Travel, the sea and ships, biography, history, *belles lettres*, literature, social and political questions, economics, gardening, art and archæology.

We give special care to the production of the books we publish in order to secure that the material side of the book shall blend with the intellectual, to form a pleasing and harmonious whole.

We do not publish school books.

HURST AND BLACKETT, LTD., Paternoster House, E.C.4.

Messrs. Hurst and Blackett are always prepared to consider fiction of all kinds. While style is not without its importance, it is essential that all novels submitted should have, as far as possible, a strong and original plot. First novels receive every consideration. Special attention is given to detective, adventure and mystery stories, and the novel dealing with modern social problems and relationships. Books of travel and memoirs are given great prominence in Messrs.

Hurst and Blackett's lists of publications. These can be of a very varied nature, but should always be of an interesting character and attractive style, and, as far as possible, off the beaten track. In the case of biographies, books dealing with lesser known but interesting characters of the past and more prominent people and problems of to-day are most likely to be accepted. Original and good illustrations should be submitted when possible with all works of non-fiction. This firm is especially interested in books of a general nature dealing with themes of an unusual and startling character. Any MS., however, which has a wide appeal will be given every consideration.

**HUTCHINSON AND CO., 34, Paternoster Row,
E.C.4.**

Messrs. Hutchinson and Company are ready to consider works of every description. Novels dealing with modern themes are especially acceptable, as are mystery, adventure and historical stories with strong original plots. It has always been the policy of this firm to encourage new authors. First novels are therefore welcomed. Besides fiction, the range of MSS. accepted is very wide. Autobiographies and books of memoirs dealing with personalities of interest to the public are required. Biographies and reminiscences of a political, social, literary, military and sporting nature also receive favourable consideration. *Belles lettres* and essays of real literary value find a prominent place in Messrs. Hutchinson's list. In addition to the foregoing, Nature books, popular science, travel and adventure and the lives of prominent historical characters, written in an interesting manner from the personal point of view, always stand a good chance of acceptance. In all suitable non-fiction works, photographs or other illustrations are a desirable feature. Messrs. Hutchinson and Company, realising the growing interest of the public in psychic matters, have become the recognised publishers of books dealing with spiritualistic and psychic phenomena; and MSS. of an original and interesting nature dealing with these subjects

always receive careful consideration. Books on sport written from a popular standpoint are welcome, as indeed are all books with a wide and popular appeal, including juveniles.

JARROLDs, 10 and 11, Warwick Lane, E.C.4.

" You give me a very wide question to answer in a very short space : for we are open to publish any category of literature, except highly technical books or special art monographs.

"In so far as one can postulate *in vacuo* the desirable qualities in a MS. we emphatically do not want—this is rather a negative postulate—books written with the definite object of becoming ' best-sellers ' ; if for no other reason than because I strongly hold the view that a work written solely with that object can, with the rarest exceptions, never achieve it. It is time that the legend of the completely cynical best-selling author were exploded, even though many of them fondly pretend to answer to that description. ' Writing down to the public ' is, in point of fact, no better for the pocket than it is for the soul.

" It was on this belief that our Jay Library was founded, a series consisting for the most part, as you know, of novels which publishers' readers who ' knew what the public want ' could praise but not recommend for publication, and of which the authors themselves in many cases despaired, on the grounds that their work lacked what are supposed to be the recognised insignia of large sales. The success of this Library, about which so many people were sceptical, has encouraged us to continue it indefinitely, and on the same perverse principles.

" At the other pole, we are on the look-out for really good mystery stories, for we issue, as you know, a sequence of these, one of which appears on the first of each month. Mystery stories can, of course, be frankly ' thrillers,' like some of Poe's, or elaborate jig-saw puzzles like many of the Sherlock Holmes stories. In either case, they require the greatest technical skill, for their regular public (which is well known to be surprisingly highbrow in its composition) is hypercritical and discerning.

"Thirdly, as the publishers of 'Black Beauty,' we are inclined still to cherish a long tradition in animal stories, Nature books, and most kinds of children's books.

"To sum up in general what has already, I am afraid, been a series of vague generalisations, we are anxious for any sincere piece of work by any author, known or unknown, that is good enough to have attracted a quorum of, say, seven rejection slips."—MR. B. LEVY.

JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD, LTD., Vigo Street, W.

This Firm, which has always been particularly noted for its introduction of original and enterprising talent to the public, is interested in practically all kinds of work, except educational, economic, religious and technical publications. Interesting memoirs, biographies and reminiscences, books of travel, adventure and topography, books on art and artists; music and the drama, poetry, plays, criticism, *belles lettres* and fiction of all kinds are features of their list, and all MSS. falling under these headings will receive careful consideration. They are also interested in foreign translations of suitable books and in any original and distinctive work submitted by artists and illustrators.

T. WERNER LAURIE, LTD., 30, New Bridge Street, Blackfriars, E.C.4.

We have a market for household books, cookery, health, etiquette, domestic economy, etc., and we can also use books on topography (cathedrals, churches, old inns, etc.). We publish "collectors'" books on china, old glass, furniture, and other kindred subjects. We can also use travel books, books on occultism, and bright fiction.

We are *not* interested in MSS. on theology, juveniles, nor scientific books, school books, political economy or philosophy.

JOHN LONG, LTD., 12, 13 & 14, Norris Street, Haymarket, S.W.1.

"What has been bringing me to town daily for over thirty years is to discover 'best-sellers'—in which respect

I think I may say I have not been entirely unsuccessful. I can give no hard and fast rule as to what constitutes a 'best-seller' as no one can gauge the vagaries of the reading public. The whole thing is a huge gamble."

—MR. JOHN LONG.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD., St. Martin's Street, W.C.2.

We have published works by Mr. Thomas Hardy, Mr. Rudyard Kipling, Lord Morley, Mr. James Stephens, Mr. William Butler Yeats, and many others such as these, and we hope to publish many more in the future. We always like to undertake the publication of important books, such as Sir Sidney Lee's "Life of King Edward VII." which we have just produced. We like to publish good books of all kinds whenever we can get them.

METHUEN AND CO., LTD., 36, Essex Street, W.C.2.

As we do not specialise, our wants are easily described: we want entertaining and informative books in general literature, and, on the scholastic side, trustworthy works in every branch of education.

Novelists who devote themselves to the minute analysis of sexual emotions would probably save time if they sent their MSS. to other firms.

MILLS AND BOON, LTD., 49, Rupert Street, W.1.

We are interested in fiction, general literature of a popular nature, and educational books.

We are particularly keen on new authors.

JOHN MURRAY, 50a, Albemarle Street, W.1.

Of course, every publisher wants to bring out books that pay their way—and something more—but like all who desire to uphold the dignity and good name of our craft—I want to bring out books which have a permanent value and are of use to mankind.

These two principles, profit and credit, are often in conflict—and the higher one—the luxury of publishing really good books with but a meagre chance of profit—has to some extent suffered by the still exorbitant cost of production since the War.

As regards fiction, I regard the more pronounced type of "problem novels" as bad in every way—bad in art, execution and influence. Such eminent writers as Sir Walter Scott, Dickens and George Eliot never condescended to such meretricious methods.

One of the dangers of "the Trade" nowadays is the growing tendency in some quarters to try to lure away an author from the publisher who has helped him (or her) to start on a successful career. An author should, of course, have perfectly free choice in regard to his publisher, but I think it is wrong that he should be led—often misled—into leaving a firm which may have incurred heavy outlay and risks in making his name and works known. What would happen to a solicitor or a doctor who deliberately tried to entice a profitable client or patient from a rival? Our craft should stand on a level with these professions in the matter of fair competition.

I could tell some strange things on this subject, but for obvious reasons I do not do so.

NISBET AND CO., LTD., 22, Berners Street, W.1.

"In a list as general as ours, which includes almost every type of literature, the one indispensable quality seems to me to be personality. In other words, the writer must have something to say which is not derivative, but is the expression of a first-hand individual experience, and must say it with complete sincerity. This is the hall-mark which distinguishes the book which is worth while from the many which are not. It applies equally to work of pure imagination, such as fiction, and to those of a different order, such as biography, recollections, criticism, religious and devotional experience, and even to books on science, philosophy and economics.

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Spring 1929

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by **WINIFRED JAMES**

Author of "Saturday's Children," etc.

An unusual tale dealing with the material and the supernatural; in which we are introduced to three generations of a wealthy merchant family. In this thoughtful piece of writing, Miss James gives us something more than a story in her attempt to solve the eternal problem of death and its relationship to life.

HUTCHINSON

General Novels 7/6

Darkened Rooms

by *SIR PHILIP GIBBS*

Author of "The Middle of the Road" (97th thous.), "The Age of Reason" (30th thous.), etc.

This new novel is entirely different from anything which Sir Philip Gibbs has previously written. Strange as it may seem, *Darkened Rooms* does not deal with war, youth, politics, or social problems: it is, in fact, an adventure in a very strange No-Man's-Land.

Tryphena

by *EDEN PHILLPOTTS*

Author of "The Ring Fence," etc.

The story of Tryphena Croom: her babyhood, childhood, and her growth to womanhood. We sympathise with her failings and her triumphs, and above all, her passionate love of life. The author has, in his latest novel, captured to the full the proud, simple and beautiful spirit that makes his beloved West Country so entrancing.

Eve the Enemy

by *E. TICKNER EDWARDES*

Author of "The Sunset Bride," etc.

Mr. Edwardes, who has lived for many years in the quiet villages of Sussex, is a shrewd yet kindly observer, and in *Eve the Enemy* he recounts the story of South Down village life—its joys, disappointments and sorrows, its aspirations and loves, with deft touches of humour and pathos. Mr. Edwardes weaves a story which, for originality and charm, is quite the best he has given us.

Tarnish

by *URSULA BLOOM*

Author of "An April After," etc.

This is the story of Monica and of what she made of life, or rather what life made of her. In her youth she had her joys, her aspirations and her loves—and then came Dicky. Sophisticated was Dicky, unsophisticated was Monica—and she married him and lost her happiness. The manner in which Monica solved her problems is told with sympathy.

We That Are Left

by *ISABEL C. CLARKE*

Author of "Strangers of Rome," etc.

A post-war story of a family whose two brilliant elder sons have been killed in the war. Two daughters survive, and a younger son whose nervous system has been shattered by an air-raid in childhood. Neglected by his somewhat thriftless parents, his one friend is his sister Allison, the heroine of the book. The reactions of the brother and sister to the stern domination of the latter's husband and the gradual disciplining of Aubrey are graphically related.

HUTCHINSON

General Novels 7/6

Lily Christine

by *MICHAEL ARLEN*

Author of "Young Men in Love," "The Green Hat," etc.

A brilliant picture of everyday life, shorn of its glistening tinsel and specious counterfeit. In a series of brilliant etchings are shown Lily Christine, Rupert, Muriel, Ivor, Ambatriadi and the rest, fighting out their battles to the bitter end. . . . It is quiet, this story of Lily Christine, yet enlivened by masterly flashes of wit and epigram; in very truth a tale which will achieve the impossible—namely, that of enhancing Michael Arlen's already great reputation.

Shrimpton-in-Space

by *OWEN RUTTER*

Author of "Chandu" (9th thousand), etc.

Owen Rutter's latest novel is a wild and joyous extravaganza concerning the astonishing fate that overtook the village of Upper Shrimpton, which, by a mysterious convulsion of nature, became a tiny world of its own. The story of its adventures is told in a vein half of fantasy, half of satire, and through it move the figure of Mr. Harold Drake, the little postmaster with the soul of an explorer to whom Upper Shrimpton came to turn in the time of its extremity.

A New Novel

by *E. W. SAVI*

Author of "A Man's A Man," etc.

Mariette's Lovers

by *G. B. BURGIN*

Author of "Allandale's Daughters," etc.

Beautiful Mariette Delorme, daughter of the Sheriff of Four Corners, has three lovers, and we have the action and reaction on themselves and the beautiful Mariette, one of the most delightful heroines of the many to whom this author has introduced us. We follow the course of this tale of true love with its laughter and tears, its incident and pathos, and lay down the book with regret.

White Witches

by *M. FORREST*

Author of "Hibiscus Heart," etc.

An unusual story with an Australian setting, showing how strange influences are exerted upon a group of people by the trees which grow near their dwellings.

One More River

by *LAURENCE KIRK*

Author of "Dangerous Cross Roads," etc.

This story of Giles Acland's life is one of the most sympathetic studies of post-war youth that has yet been written. This is undoubtedly a book to read, because it reveals the spirit of youth with unusual understanding.

HUTCHINSON

General Novels 7/6

Roon

by The Hon. HERBERT ASQUITH

Author of "Young Orland" (15th impression), etc.

The main theme of this story is the conflict in a woman's character between her sense of duty and her sense of romance, each pulling in different directions and each having their victories, sometimes humorous, sometimes tragic in their effect. The book contains more than one love story, a wide and various gallery of characters, and a vivid picture of the life and society of our own time.

The Lighted Caravan

by MARGARET BAILLIE-SAUNDERS

Author of "Herself M.P." etc.

A vivid venture of faith—plus love—which travels indiscriminately over the russet byways and lonely salt-marshes of Norfolk broadlands, the crude life of society London, and the wharves and shipping of sea-port havens, in a house on wheels. The theme of this story is the modern problem of neo-Christianity, and its lapse into nature-worship—the creed of the week-ender.

Where the Loon Calls

by HARRY SINCLAIR DRAGO

This well-known author pioneers among the French Canadians who dwell on the marsh-lands which lie along the western shore of Lake Erie between Toledo and Detroit. This was the land of Mr. Drago's boyhood, and with amazing realism and delightful characterisation he spins a tale that leaves one wondering where fiction begins and history ends.

In Chains

by JOSEPH DELMONT

This striking novel gives a realistic portrayal of a handful of men and women belonging to a Jewish community in a South Russian village. We follow the tragedies and comedies of their oppressed and melancholy lives, and observe how they react to their difficult circumstances. Brilliantly-drawn characters, together with graphic pen-pictures of the grim struggle for existence, make this one of the most forceful and moving pieces of fiction of recent times.

Autumn Woman

by SEWELL STOKES

This story deals with the love of a young man for an elderly woman, and, contrary to custom, one is able to regard the woman with liking. In her young days, Lois Atherton had been a beautiful and talented actress, and age had done little to mar her beauty. To her villa at Grasse came Lucian Nickson, who gradually succumbed to Lois' intriguing charms. . . .

HUTCHINSON

General Novels 7/6

The Altar of Honour

by *ETHEL M. DELL*

Author of "The Unknown Quantity," "Bars of Iron" (721st Thous.), etc.

A lonely girl who, in order to escape from the cruel domination of her half-sister, accepts in marriage the heir to an ancient and honoured title. On the eve of her wedding, the adored hero of her younger days returns, yet her complete submission to the will of others renders it impossible for her to avoid the overwhelming consequences. It is only when a human sacrifice is laid upon the Altar of Honour that there comes to her at last the blessings of Peace.

The Young Milliner by *AELFRIDA TILLYARD*

A daintily-wrought tale of Cambridge more than a hundred years ago, *The Young Milliner* is a witty, yet pensive story written in the style of the period, concerning Mrs. Foxton and her four charming daughters. How town and gown rags were fought near the ladies' front door, how a noble undergraduate's tame bear escaped from its master, how an air-balloon ascended, how the end of the world did not come when it was expected, and how the four sisters were finally settled in life, the reader must find out for himself.

Water!

by *ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE*

Author of "Gray Dawn," etc.

Another magnificent dog story wherein is related the titanic struggle for water-rights on the outskirts of a great city. Heather, a courageous golden collie, proves to be Gavin Cole's best friend. The remarkable courage and sagacity displayed by Heather will prove an inspiration to all lovers of "man's best friend."

And All That Beauty

by *ROY BRIDGES*

Author of "Through Another Gate" (3rd thousand), etc.

How the uncontrolled passions of a man can turn that which is beautiful into devastating tragedy, is the central theme of Roy Bridges' powerful new story. *And All That Beauty* is a novel to stir the emotions. Because of her inherent goodness and the manner in which she reacts to circumstances, Rose Waltham, that plaything of the gods, is a character all readers will long remember.

This Love Business

by *JOHN FEARNS*

This Australian novel, in which the social side of life in New Guinea as well as that of the mainland combine to make an interesting and fascinating story, is more than a piece of superficial fiction. The treatment of its theme, the eternal question, is keenly analytical, deeply introspective and clearly philosophic.

HUTCHINSON

General Novels 7/6

Don Careless

by **REX BEACH**

Author of "The Mating Call," etc.

This volume consists of two long complete stories by one of the greatest exponents of forceful and dramatic writing of the day. The scene of *Don Careless* is the South American Republic of Bolivar, whilst *Birds of Prey*, the second tale, concerns the mysterious death of Stuyvesant Ballard, a wealthy stockbroker. These two stories of such widely divergent themes are full of that characterisation and sense of drama which make Rex Beach's work so popular.

Grey and Gold

by **EMMELINE MORRISON**

Author of "Red Poppies," etc.

Blind Vision

by **MICHAEL MAURICE**

Author of "But in Ourselves," etc.

This powerful book narrates the spiritual pilgrimage of Luther Wing. The journeyings of his soul through the perils of youth, the loftiness of his aspirations, and the call he felt to the mission fields of Africa, are faithfully recorded in language that never falls into religious sentimentality.

The Tapestry of Dreams

by **JOAN A. COWDROY**

Author of "Mask," etc.

A quietly-written story woven around the lives of the middle-class, in which Miss Cowdroy mainly concerns herself with an investigation of the development of her heroine's soul. In this interesting psychological study are revealed the author's penetrating insight and sympathetic understanding of her characters.

Lady, Take Care !

by **I. B. KERSHAW**

Author of "Tarnished Virtue," etc.

Jane, dowdy and motherless, living with an impoverished, neglectful father on a Devonshire farm, goes to a smart county ball. The unaccustomed wine dulls her wits, and turns her into an unwilling eavesdropper of a married man's intrigue with a young girl. Thence after many travels, which cut across the tangled skein of romances other than her own, leading her through the vicious underworld of Paris, she finds the solution of many things, and an answer to a question.

HUTCHINSON

General Novels 7/6

Into the Land of Nod

by *HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL*

Author of "The Yard," "Quinneys," etc.

The story of a young man of parts, who transmits a "taint" in his blood from which he himself is free, and is one which should challenge the interest and attention of all parents. Mr. Vachell explains briefly in a preface what led to his writing the story, which is founded on fact, and his reasons for using the title which, so he tells us, would otherwise never have occurred to him.

Paying Guests

by *E. F. BENSON*

A new novel by the famous author of "Dodo," etc.

The House of Corbeen by *ANDREW SOUTAR*

Author of "An Island for Two," etc.

It is the simple mistakes we make in life that devastate our happiness. Here was a woman who, as a young romantic girl, surrendered herself to the blandishments of an artiste who believed that his art entitled him to snap his fingers at the laws which govern morals. There are dramatic situations which hold one in suspense. There is comedy arising out of the impecunious "rich." The whole story is a commentary on the life of the generation: deceit, vanity, fear of the truth.

An Island for Two

by *ANDREW SOUTAR*

Author of "The Phantom in the House," etc.

When they were boy and girl lovers they had their dreams, Moira and Michael. And the dream they loved better than all the others was that of an island made just for the two of them. The day came when that dream was realised, but not in the circumstances which their romantic minds had conceived in the beginning.

The Judge of Jerusalem by *URSULA BLOOM*

Author of "The Great Beginning," "Vagabond Harvest," etc. 3s. 6d. net

A vivid picture of the author's conception of England plunged within the next few years into the bloodshed of revolution. Intensely human. and written with modern realism.

HUTCHINSON

General Novels 7/6

Out of the Pit

by *A. M. BATES*

It is a pity that there are not more Elizabeth Buddens in real life. To possess a friend whose chief idiosyncrasy is to help young men of no means but of gentle birth is an asset, and when John St. John, the hero of this tale, met Elizabeth, it was determined that his life was to be filled with romance and adventure. . . . This is a first novel of unusual promise.

Mystery Novels 7/6

A New Novel

by *EDGAR WALLACE*

Author of "The Twister," etc.

A long thrilling novel by this master of dramatic situations. No storyteller of to-day enjoys a greater popularity than does Edgar Wallace, and readers may rest assured that his new story contains, in full degree, those qualities which have earned him such a world-wide reputation.

The Fourth Finger

by *ANTHONY WYNNE*

Author of "The Dagger," "Red Scar," etc.

The fourth finger of the left hand was missing; it had been hacked off at a blow. As he gazed at the skeleton, Dr. Hailey realised that insight had been given him into the darkest recess of a mind essentially criminal. But the criminal remained free among his fellows, unsuspected and unfeared. And there were others, against whom his hate turned as fiercely as it had burned against this, his earliest victim.

The Catpaws

by *COLLIN BROOKS*

Author of "The Body Snatchers," etc.

An account of a conspiracy to make a monarchy of Matvia, one of the new republics on the borders of Russia. The little Princess, who is the claimant, disappears from Paris; the search for her and the plot to make her Queen, takes General Wetherby into the thick of a difficult situation. . . . Romance, plot and counterplot, hair-breadth escapes, and sinister intrigues form the ingredients of this rattling good yarn, which is set in three Capitals.

Fraser Butts In

by *HUGH CLEVELY*

Author of "The Gang Smasher," etc.

Ian Fraser was a young man whose mild and unassuming manner hid a talent for quiet, thoughtful devilment, and whose sense of humour was considered by some people to be perverted. It was his sense of humour which made him accompany Mr. Horace Minton to The Golden Centipede Club, but it was his talent for devilment which led him to make his spectacular escape with beautiful Christine Stevens when the club was raided. . . . A story of humour, mystery, and thrilling adventure, with a fascinating and unusual love interest running through it.

HUTCHINSON

Mystery Novels 7/6

Doctor Artz

by **ROBERT HICHENS**

Author of "The Streets and Other Stories" (6th thousand), etc.

A powerful story by this famous author built around the life and actions of the sinister Doctor Artz, an Italian-Swiss; ugly, with a body almost suggesting deformity, who possesses a strange power of attraction for young and beautiful girls. Three times he has married, and when the story opens, one of these wives is dead; the other two he has got rid of by divorce, having grown tired of them. Artz is famous for his mysterious methods of rejuvenation, which bring him many patients from foreign countries. A compelling tale in the best Hichens' vein.

A New Novel

by **BRUCE GRAEME**

Author of "Hate Ship," etc.

There is not a chapter in this book which is not replete with drama, not a character which does not seem to live. Moreover, with regard to the plot, we can only say that the ending will hold a surprise for the astutest reader.

The Nine Club

by **T. CLARE**

"The Nine Club" was a most select and exclusive gathering. Its nine members were of world-wide reputation and esteem; but the world did not know the conditions of membership. The manner in which the gang was eventually exterminated makes a yarn that will keep the sleepiest reader from his bed until the last page is turned.

The Finger of Death

by **HENRY CONNOLLY**

Author of "Money for Something," etc.

A postcard with "You will be convicted of murder" written on it, is not going to deter any right-minded young lady from playing in a tennis tournament—especially with an agreeable partner. At any rate, Ann Black—the charming ward of Ben Holt—refused to be put off her stroke by such a message. Nevertheless Ben Holt is found murdered, and the only person who can benefit by his death is the dauntless Ann. . . .

Criminal Square

by **HARRINGTON HASTINGS**

A stirring story of love, hatred and adventure, describing how "The Inner Circle," a powerful organisation of international crooks, attempts to obtain possession of the formula of a new poison-gas discovered by an unknown scientist in the dark days of the War; and telling how four friends, unaided by the police, eventually save the papers and place them in the safe keeping of the Government.

HUTCHINSON

Mystery Novels 7/6

Phantom Fingers

by LYON MEARSON

Author of "Footsteps in the Dark," etc.

Before the horror-filled eyes of a terrified audience, Augustin Arnold, the *matinée* idol, is strangled to death on the stage of the Grand Theatre, by invisible hands. The understudy, who takes up the murdered man's part, is throttled in the same mysterious manner and comes within an ace of losing his life. With thrilling intensity the author projects the *dénouement* of this murder-mystery.

The Twisted Grin

by ARTHUR SALCROFT

Author of "The Mystery of the Walled Garden," etc.

Had Professor Braille, whilst in the employ of Sir Hubert Wayne, not been clever enough to discover a mysterious ray, this tale could never have been told. And doubtless, if the Professor *had* lived to witness the sinister uses to which his ray was put, he would have cursed his ingenuity. Plot and counter-plot, hair-raising thrills and a surprising *dénouement* make a superlative story.

Squatter's Treasure

by EMART KINSBURN

Author of "The Boss of Camp Four," etc.

This well-known author again introduces us to the life of the Western construction camps and the curious characters who work in them. It is a phase of Western life which few writers know as thoroughly as Mr. Kinsburn. The girl construction-camp foreman, who is the leading character in this story, has some thrilling adventures in her quest for hidden treasure.

The Fatal Record by CHRISTOPHER B. BOOTH

Author of "The House of Rogues," etc.

A gramophone plays an important part in the structure of mystery and crime in this story. Caleb Ballinger's weak heart failed him, and he fell dead, when he heard the blaring music sounding from his gramophone downstairs. . . .

Who started the gramophone playing the fatal record? That was the problem Detective Jim Bliss was called upon to solve.

The Man behind the Curtain

by DOUGLAS WALSH

Author of "The Smoke Screen," etc.

When the authorities dismissed her uncle's death as being due to heart failure, Hester Wade was far from satisfied. Accordingly she sought some one to undertake investigations, and eventually selected Tony Sutton, who was certainly the complete amateur detective. The story of his thrilling six months' furlough will leave the reader breathless.

HUTCHINSON

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